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Sermons of the Rev. C.H.
Spurgeon of London

SERMONS

PREACHED IN 1888

BY

C. H. SPURGEON

OF LONDON

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SPURGEON, AND REACHING THE PEOPLE.

BY ARTHUR T. PIERSON, D. D.

In these days, God, by His providence, is teaching His church how to reach the masses of the people. The colossal enterprise now headed by Chas. H. Spurgeon, in London, is an example of what may be accomplished in this direction by one man. About thirty-five years ago this young man, then twenty years old, began to preach, to a handful of people, in an ordinary modern church building in that great city. His simple, earnest preaching caused the congregation to grow till the house was full. One evening, in 1854, he made a plea for enlargement, and remarked: "By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, and by faith, this wall at the back shall come down, too." An aged and prudent church officer, in a somewhat dictatorial tone, said to him at the close of the sermon: "Let us never hear of that again." "What do you mean?" said the preacher; "you will hear no more about it *when it is done*, and therefore the sooner you set about it the better." It was not long before the work of enlargement began, and meanwhile worship was carried on at Exeter Hall, which was, of course, a very much larger place. But during the three months of the use of that place for preaching services the crowds continued, often actually blocking up the street. To return to the enlarged church on Park Street was absurd, and yet there were those who thought it too bad a waste of money and material to let such a church building stand unoccupied, in order that three times as many might hear a free gospel in a hall; and so Exeter Hall was abandoned, and back they went to the remodeled edifice. It was filled, but it was so evident to all that God had attended services in the hall with a far greater measure of good, that in June, 1856, they determined to use the hall for half a day, and so

Mr. Spurgeon preached in the morning at the church, and in the evening at the hall.

All went well, under the new arrangement, but no one could fail to see that the evening service was working a far grander result, in numbers and in the class of non-church-goers reached; and so, after a two months' trial of this method, a movement began, looking to the building of a large tabernacle, fitted to hold the masses, and with abundant room, first, for habitual attendants to find a church-home and, secondly, for the common people at large to find free welcome. Of course, there were those who opposed this project; the idea of giving up a fine commodious church, recently enlarged and refitted, and undertaking to put up a building to hold five thousand people, was scouted as absurd. But the mass of the church felt that it was far more important to *reach the people* than to hold fast to the old order; and so that building was abandoned. Unable to get control longer of Exeter Hall, on October 19, 1856, this heroic pastor and his people undertook a *venture of faith*. They hired the large Music Hall in Surrey Gardens, just built for M. Jullien's monster concerts, and held there the first Sabbath evening service. About 7,000 persons were assembled. Some evil-disposed persons created a panic, and in the rush seven persons were crushed to death, and four times as many were seriously injured. Mr. Spurgeon's nervous system was so terribly shocked that he was perfectly prostrated, but two weeks after was again able to preach. To avoid fear of further panic, the service at Music Hall was transferred to the morning, though the evening was regarded more favorable to large congregations. Yet for three years that immense hall was crowded by all classes. Thousands hitherto unaccustomed to attend church found their way to this free place of worship, and hundreds found a Saviour. Often *ten thousand souls* were gathered there to hear that simple gospel preacher. And it was no worldly bait that drew them. Even the singing was congregational, and led by a precentor—Mr. Spurgeon "lining out" every hymn in old-time style.

In May, 1861, regular work was begun on the New Tabernacle, which was dedicated without debt, though it cost over $150,000 in gold. It can hold, without excessive crowding, 6,000 persons, and is always at least comfortably filled. During five Sabbaths in May, 1867, while the repairs were in progress on the Tabernacle, the congregation used Agricultural Hall, which was crowded every Sunday morning by 20,000 persons.

The work of conversion goes on constantly; the Lord adds to the church *daily* such as shall be saved. The average gross increase yearly to the church-membership has been 390—clear increase, 204.

In twenty-one years the membership ran up from 313 to 4,813 ; and probably fully as many converts have gone into other churches. And yet, had the advice of a large and respectable minority been followed, or had the jealousy of other congregations interfered to prevent the new enterprise, that people would yet be holding service in that old Park Street church, which, at its best, would hold not more than from 1,000 to 1,500

Mr. Spurgeon's church-enterprise does not stand alone as a proof that the early success of the apostolic church may be repeated in these latter times Mr Moody has gone through not a few cities in this country and Britain, holding free services in immense temporary buildings capable of holding from 3,000 to 20,000 ; and no length of time has so far made the numbers less or the interest to flag. An Episcopal Church in New York City—and it seemed to some a serious departure from the stateliness of their traditional dignity!—put up a free gospel-tent, and the amazing success of the plan, even with a system having so little flexibility and adaptability as the Episcopal, was supposed to have startled the whole of Christendom. At one season more persons were confirmed in that one church than were ever presented in any Episcopal church in this country, at one time. Pere Hyacinthe preached every Sunday in the Amphitheatre of the Chateau d'Eau, at Paris, to more than 4,000 people.

The most marked successes in reaching the people seem to have been attained in large halls, or so-called tabernacles. And there is a reason. A building that is plain, large and free, built without regard to display, and evidently intended for the multitudes, strangely attracts the multitudes. Wesley and Whitefield discovered this long ago. And there are reasons why even size and capacity are essential helps to draw the people

1. Power goes with a multitude; there is a mysterious attraction which draws us to go where we find a crowd.

2. Individuals are lost sight of in the mass. Many a man or woman dreads to enter an ordinary church, from the feeling that all eyes are turned toward the stranger, especially if such be very plainly clad and not at home in a church; but such slip in unconsciously with the multitude.

3. In a large church there will be room enough for regular attendants to have a regular place, without crowding strangers, or making the distinction too apparent between themselves and the habitual pew-holders.

And then we feel constrained to say that there is so much that is called preaching in these days that is no more evangelical or fitted to convert men than a political harangue or a secular lecture

or an historical essay, that there is the more reason why the largest access to souls should be given to any man who in *simplicity and power does magnify Christ crucified.* For one I rejoice when I see the man who dares in this day to know only this grand theme, having a place that will hold the people in great numbers, and having it full—if I cannot have access to the masses, or cannot hold them, God send them to hear the man who can win and save the lost!

To one feature of this great church enterprise it behooves us to pay special heed. This is only a *centre* from which radiate in every direction evangelizing influences. This church is a mother of churches, missions, Sunday Schools, preaching stations and every conceivable form of outside gospel extension and benevolent work, and this not *because* the church is so prosperous—this *makes* the church prosperous. Every effort, self-sacrifice, onward movement, looking toward the masses of the people living about in practical heathenism, has a *reacting influence on the church centre.* Men and women go out to carry a blessing and come back to bring a greater blessing than they bore away; they come to tell of good done, souls won, hungry fed, and the Spirit outpoured; and so the mother church is constantly warmed and fed and filled and inspired anew!

This church is a little kingdom; it has a score of departments within itself; there is the Pastor's college, now in a separate building, with over a hundred students, and an outlay of about $22,500, raised by voluntary subscription. More than 700 of its students are now preaching the gospel in various parts of the kingdom, and several hundred lay preachers have been furnished beside, drawn from the plow or, for aught I know, from the scissors grinders on the streets. It does not seek to *make* preachers so much as to *aid* and *educate* those who show a capacity and a devotion for that work; and during the two years' course the aim is to help students to publish "the plain gospel in a plain way." In the metropolis and suburbs, about fifty chapels are supplied by these students or graduates of this college.

A little further off is the group of *Almshouses*, in which scores of the poorest, feeblest of the congregation are sheltered and fed, and this again is maintained by voluntary offerings. In connection with the almshouses is a boys' school, where 300 pupils are taught. There is beside a Colportage society, employing men who act as both salesmen and evangelists. Still more, there is the Stockwell orphanage, founded in 1869; and it had a curious origin. Mr. Spurgeon wrote an article for the *Sword and Trowel*, urging the

founding of an orphanage, and accompanied by an illustration intended to represent Arnold, the Swiss patriot, throwing himself into the ranks of the Austrian army. The wood cut was so wretched that not a few read the article in order to *read* the illustration! A benevolent lady wrote shortly, offering to give 20,000 pounds for a boys' orphanage. This was reserved for an endowment fund, and a large enough sum raised by subscription both to build the orphan houses and to add 5,000 pounds to the endowment fund. It is a faith work, and some 500 are now in the institution, the buildings of which cover six acres.

Spurgeon himself is both a full and ready man, and his pen is always busy. He has a *lecture on candles*, provoked by a challenge from a student, in reply to his remark that the most unpromising of subjects might be made, in earnest hands, to yield good and interesting matter, like the German novel knitting needles, and Sterne's sermon on the text, "Is there any taste in the white of an egg?"

It is no small testimony to the balance of his character that neither extravagant praise nor censure caused Spurgeon to fall from his consistency or integrity, or to falter in his evangelical work. Edward Irving, with still greater gifts, with a scholarship that was only matched by his splendid imagination and marvellous eloquence, lost his balance under the influence of similar temptations.

Mr. Spurgeon's sermons are regularly reported by a short-hand writer and given publication in cheap form; their circulation varies from 20,000 to nearly half a million.

This great church, once in a stagnant state, began, however, to move, to move in the direction of extending its influence in the metropolis; first one new station was manned, Sunday School and preaching and prayer meeting began, God's blessing followed unselfish effort, and the rewards of Christian work were so rich that new endeavors were provoked and new self-denials attempted. We ought not to rest content with our present church idleness. There is many a church which has a possible future of both members and power, and may shake our cities to their centre. New churches, preaching stations, Sunday Schools, orphanages, all may grow up around us, on one condition: *voluntary self-sacrifice for Christ.* No alive minister of Christ can long remain where he cannot see the church engaged in aggressive work. We care little what is done if it be only done and done in the Lord's way. O, for consecration of capital, not only of money, but of brains, and muscle, and affection and service.

There are men by the score who could preach the gospel in these

cities with uncommon power, and they are here in our congregations, and they rarely open their mouths. There are men here who are burying capital in investments and lands and bonds and buildings, who could give an impulse to new enterprises whose usefulness would be ever increasing till Gabriel blows his trumpet and declares that there shall be no longer delay! O for a consecrated ambition to push the chariot of the Lord forward till the Lord himself shall come!

I.

THE LORD AND THE LEPER.

February 12, 1888.

"And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed."—MARK i. 40, 41, 42.

BELOVED, we saw in the reading that our Lord had been engaged in special prayer. He had gone alone on the mountain-side to have communion with God. Simon and the rest search for him, and he comes away in the early morning, with the burrs from the hill-side upon his garments, the smell of the field upon him, even of a field the Lord God had blessed; he comes forth among the people, charged with power which he had received in communion with the Father; and now we may expect to see wonders. And we do see them; for devils fear and fly when he speaks the word; and by-and-by there comes to him one, an extraordinary being, condemned to live apart from the rest of men, lest he should spread defilement all around. A leper comes to him, and kneels before him, and expresses his confident faith in him, that he can make him whole. Now is the Son of Man glorious in his power to save.

The Lord Jesus Christ at this day has all power in

heaven and in earth. He is charged with a divine energy to bless all who come to him for healing. Oh that we may see to-day some great wonder of his power and grace! Oh for one of the days of the Son of Man here and now! To that end it is absolutely needful that we should find a case for his spiritual power to work upon. Is there not one here in whom his grace may prove its omnipotence? Not you, ye good, ye self-righteous! You yield him no space to work in. You that are whole have no need of a physician: in you there is no opportunity for him to display his miraculous force. But yonder are the men we seek for. Forlorn, and lost, full of evil, and self-condemned, you are the characters we seek. You that feel as if you were possessed with evil spirits, and you that are leprous with sin, you are the persons in whom Jesus will find ample room and verge enough for the display of his holy skill. Of you I might say, as he once said of the man born blind: you are here that the works of God may be manifest in you. You, with your guilt and your depravity, you furnish the empty vessels into which his grace may be poured, the sick souls upon whom he may display his matchless power to bless and save. Be hopeful, then, ye sinful ones! Look up this morning for the Lord's approach, and expect that even in you he will work great marvels. This leper shall be a picture—yea, I hope a mirror—in whom you will see yourselves. I do pray that as I go over the details of this miracle, many here may put themselves in the leper's place, and do just as the leper did, and receive, just as the leper received, cleansing from the hand of Christ. O Spirit of the living God, the thousands of our Israel now entreat thee to work, that Jesus, the Son of God, may be glorified here and now!

I. I will begin my rehearsal of the gospel narrative by remarking, first, that THIS LEPER'S FAITH MADE HIM EAGER TO BE HEALED. He was a leper; I will not stay just now to describe what horrors are compacted into that single word; but he believed that Jesus could cleanse him, and his belief stirred him to an anxious desire to be healed at once.

Alas! we have to deal with spiritual lepers eaten up with the foul disease of sin; but *some of them do not believe that they ever can be healed*, and the consequence is that despair makes them sin most greedily. "I may as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," is the inward impression of many a sinner when he fears that there is no mercy and no help for him. Because there is no hope, therefore, they plunge deeper and yet deeper into the slough of iniquity. Oh that you might be delivered from that false idea! Mercy still rules the hour. There is hope while Jesus sends his gospel to you, and bids you repent. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins": this is a sweet sentence of a true creed. I believe also in the renewal of men's hearts; for the Lord can give new hearts and right spirits to the evil and unthankful. I would that you believed it; for if you did, I trust it would quicken you into seeking that your sins might be forgiven, and your minds might be renewed. Do you believe it? Then come to Jesus and receive the blessings of free grace.

We have a number of lepers who come in among us whose disease is white upon their brows, and visible to all beholders, and yet *they are indifferent:* they do not mourn their wickedness, nor wish to be cleansed from it. They sit among God's people, and they listen to the doctrine of a new birth, and the news of pardon, and they

hear the teaching as though it had nothing to do with them. If now and then they half wish that salvation would come to them, it is too languid a wish to last. They have not yet so perceived their disease and their danger as to pray to be delivered from them. They sleep on upon the bed of sloth, and care neither for heaven nor hell. Indifference to spiritual things is the sin of the age. Men are stolid of heart about eternal realities. An awful apathy is upon the multitude. The leper in our text is not so foolish as this. He eagerly desired to be delivered from his dreadful malady: with heart and soul he pined to be cleansed from its terrible defilement. Oh that it were so with you! May the Lord make you feel how depraved your heart is, and how diseased with sin are all the faculties of your soul! Alas, dear friends, *there are some that even love their leprosy!* Is it not a sad thing to have to speak thus? Surely, madness is in men's hearts. Men do not wish to be saved from doing evil. They love the ways and wages of iniquity. They would like to go to heaven, but they must have their drunken frolics on the road; they would very well like to be saved from hell, but not from the sin which is the cause of it. Their notion of salvation is not to be saved from the love of evil, and to be made pure and clean; but that is God's meaning when he speaks of salvation. How can they hope to be the slaves of sin, and yet at the same time be free? Our first necessity is to be saved from sinning. The very name of Jesus tells us *that:* he is called Jesus because "he shall save his people from their sins." These persons do not care for a salvation which would mean self-denial and the giving up of ungodly lusts. O wretched lepers, that count their leprosy to be a beauty, and take pleasure in sin, which in the

sight of God is far more loathsome than the worst disease of the body! Oh that Christ Jesus would come and change their views of things until they were of the same mind as God towards sin; and you know he calls it "that abominable thing which I hate." Oh if men could see their love to wrong things to be a disease more sickening than leprosy, they would fain be saved, and saved at once! Holy Spirit, convince us of sin, that sinners may be eager to be cleansed!

Lepers were obliged to consort together: lepers associated with lepers, and they must have made up a dreadful confraternity. How glad they would have been to escape from it! But I know spiritual lepers who *love the company of their fellow lepers.* Yes, and the more leprous a man becomes, the more do they admire him. A bold sinner is often the idol of his comrades. Though foul in his life, others cling to him for that very reason. Such persons like to learn some new bit of wickedness, they are eager to be initiated into a yet darker form of impure pleasure. Oh how they long to hear that last lascivious song, to read that last impure novel! It seems to be the desire of many to know as much evil as they can. They flock together, and take a dreadful pleasure in talk and action which is the horror of all pure minds. Strange lepers, that heap up leprosy as a treasure! Even those who do not go into gross, open sin, yet are pleased with infidel notions, and sceptical opinions, which are a wretched form of mental leprosy. O horrible malady, which makes men doubt the word of the living God!

Lepers were not allowed to associate with healthy persons except under severe restrictions. Thus were they separated from their nearest and dearest friends. What a sorrow! Alas! I know persons thus separated, who

do not wish to associate with the godly; to them holy company is dull and wearisome; they do not feel free and easy in such society, and therefore they avoid it as much as decency allows. How can they hope to live with saints forever, when they shun them now as dull, and moping acquaintances?

O my hearers, I have come hither this morning in the hope that God would bless the word to some poor sinner who feels he is a sinner, and would fain be cleansed: such is the leper I am seeking with my whole heart. I pray God to bless the word to those who wish to escape from evil company, who would no longer sit in the assembly of the mockers, nor run in the paths of the unholy. To those who have grown weary of their sinful companions, and would escape from them, lest they should be bound up in bundles with them to burn at the last great day—to such I speak at this time with a loving desire for their salvation. I hope my word will come with divine application to some poor heart here that is crying, "I wish I might be numbered with the people of God. I wish I were fit to be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord. Oh that my dreadful sinfulness were conquered, so that I could have fellowship with the godly, and be myself one of them!" I hope my Lord has brought to this place just such lost ones, that he may find them. I am looking out for them with tearful eyes. But my feeble eyes cannot read inward character; and it is well that the loving Saviour, who discerns the secrets of all hearts, and reads all inward desires, is looking from the watch-towers of heaven, that he may discover those who are coming to him, even though as yet they are a great way off. Oh that sinners may now beg and pray to be rescued from their sins! May those who have become habituated to

evil long to break off their evil habits! Happy will the preacher be if he finds himself surrounded with penitents who hate their sins, and guilty ones who cry to be forgiven, and to be so changed that they shall go and sin no more.

II. In the second place, let us remark that THIS LEPER'S FAITH WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT HE COULD BE HEALED OF HIS HIDEOUS DISEASE. *Leprosy was an unutterably loathsome disease.* As it exists even now, it is described by those who have seen it, in such a way that I will not harrow your feelings by repeating all the sickening details. The following quotation may be more than sufficient. Dr. Thompson, in his famous work, "The Land and the Book," speaks of lepers in the East, and says, "The hair falls from the head and eyebrows; the nails loosen, decay and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up and slowly fall away. The gums are absorbed, and the teeth disappear. The nose, the eyes, the tongue and the palate are slowly consumed." This disease turns a man into a mass of loathsomeness, a walking pile of pests. Leprosy is nothing better than a horrible and lingering death. The leper in the narrative before us had sad personal experience of this, and yet he believed that Jesus could cleanse him. Splendid faith! Oh that you who are afflicted with moral and spiritual leprosy could believe in this fashion! Jesus Christ of Nazareth can heal even you. Over the horror of leprosy, faith triumphed. Oh that in your case it would overcome the terribleness of sin!

Leprosy was known to be incurable. There was no case of a man being cured of real leprosy by any medical or surgical treatment. This made the cure of Naaman in

former ages so noteworthy. Observe, moreover, that our Saviour himself, so far as I can see, had never healed a leper up to the moment when this poor wretch appeared upon the scene. He had cured fever, and had cast out devils, but the cure of leprosy was in the Saviour's life as yet an unexampled thing. Yet this man, putting this and that together, and understanding something of the nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, believed that he could cure him of his incurable disease. He felt that even if the great Lord had not yet healed leprosy, he was assuredly capable of doing so great a deed, and he determined to apply to him. Was not this grand faith? Oh that such faith could be found among my hearers at this hour! Hear me, O trembling sinner: if thou be as full of sin this morning as an egg is full of meat, Jesus can remove it all. If thy propensities to sin be as untamable as the wild boar of the wood, yet Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, can subdue thine iniquities, and make thee the obedient servant of his love. Jesus can turn the lion into a lamb, and he can do it now. He can transform thee where thou art sitting, saving thee in yonder pew while I am speaking the word. All things are possible to the Saviour God; and all things are possible to him that believeth. I would thou hadst such a faith as this leper had, although if it were even less it might serve thy turn, since thou hast not all his difficulties to contend with, since Jesus has already saved many sinners like thyself, and changed many hearts as hard as thine. If he shall regenerate thee, he will be doing for thee no strange thing, but only one of the daily miracles of his grace. He has now healed thousands of thy fellow lepers: canst thou not believe that he can heal the leprosy in thee?

This man had a marvellous faith, thus to believe while *he was personally the victim of that mortal malady.* It is one thing to trust a doctor when you are well, but quite another to confide in him when your body is rotting away. For a real, conscious sinner to trust the Saviour is no mean thing. When you hope that there is some good thing in you, it is easy to be confident; but to be conscious of total ruin and yet to believe in the divine remedy—this is real faith. To see in the sunshine is mere natural vision; but to see in the dark needs the eye of faith; to believe that Jesus has saved you when you see the signs of it, is the result of reason; but to trust him to cleanse you while you are still defiled with sin—this is the essence of saving faith.

The leprosy was firmly seated and fully developed in this man. Luke says that he was "full of leprosy;" he had as much of the poison in him as one poor body could contain, it had come to its worst stage in him; and yet he believed that Jesus of Nazareth could make him clean. Glorious confidence! O my hearer, if thou art full of sin, if thy propensities and habits have become as bad as bad can be, I pray the Holy Spirit to give thee faith enough to believe that the Son of God can forgive thee and renew thee, and do it at once. With one word of his mouth Jesus can turn your death into life, your corruption into comeliness. Changes which we cannot work in others, much less in ourselves, Jesus, by his invincible Spirit, can work in the hearts of the ungodly. Of these stones, he can raise up children unto Abraham. His moral and spiritual miracles are often wrought upon cases which seem beyond all hope, cases which pity itself endeavors to forget because her efforts have been so long in vain.

I like best about this man's faith the fact that he did

not merely believe that Jesus Christ could cleanse a leper, but that he could cleanse *him!* He said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make *me* clean." It is very easy to believe for other people. There is really no faith in such impersonal, proxy confidence. The true faith believes for itself first, and then for others. Oh, I know some of you are saying, "I believe that Jesus can save my brother, I believe that he can save the vilest of the vile. If I heard that he had saved the biggest drunkard in Southwark I should not wonder." Canst thou believe all this, and yet fear that he cannot save thee? This is strange inconsistency. If he heals another man's leprosy, can he not heal *thy* leprosy? If one drunkard is saved, why not another? If in one man a passionate temper is subdued, why not in another? If lust, and covetousness, and lying, and pride have been cured in many men, why not in thee? Even if thou art a blasphemer, blasphemy has been cured; why should it not be so in thy case? He can heal thee of that particular form of sin which possesses thee, however high a degree its power may have reached; for nothing is too hard for the Lord. Jesus can change and cleanse thee now. In a moment he can impart a new life and commence a new character. Canst thou believe this? This is the faith which glorified Jesus, and brought healing to this leper; and it is the faith which will save you at once if you now exercise it. O Spirit of the living God, work this faith in the minds of my dear hearers, that they may thus win their suit with the Lord Jesus, and go their way healed of the plague of sin!

III. Now, notice, thirdly, that this man's faith was FIXED ON JESUS CHRIST ALONE. Let me read the man's words again. He said unto Jesus, "If thou wilt, thou

canst make me clean." Throw the emphasis upon the *pronouns*. See him kneeling before the Lord Jesus, and hear him say, "If *thou* wilt, *thou* canst make *me* clean." He has no idea of looking to the disciples; no, not to one of them or to all of them. He had no notion of trusting in a measure to the medicine which physicians would prescribe for him. All that is gone. No dream of other hope remains; but with his eye fully fixed on the blessed miracle-worker of Nazareth, he cries, "If *thou* wilt, *thou* canst make me clean." In himself he had no shade of confidence; every delusion of that kind had been banished by a fierce experience of his disease. He knew that none on earth could deliver him, and that by no innate power of constitution could he throw out the poison; but he confidently believed that the Son of God could by himself effect the cure. This was God-given faith—the faith of God's elect, and Jesus was its sole object.

How came this man to have such faith? I cannot tell you the outward means, but I think we may guess without presumption. Had he not *heard our Lord preach?* Matthew puts this story immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, and says, "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Had this man managed to stand at the edge of the crowd and hear Jesus speak, and did those wondrous words convince him that the great Teacher was something more than man? As he noted the style, and manner, and matter of that marvellous sermon, did he say within himself, "Never man spake like this man. Truly he is the Son of God. I believe in him. I trust him. He can cleanse me"?

May God bless the preaching of Christ crucified to you who hear me this day! Is not this used of the Lord, and made to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth?

Perhaps this man had *seen our Lord's miracles.* I feel sure he had. He had seen the devils cast out, and had heard of Peter's wife's mother, who had lain sick of a fever, and had been instantaneously recovered. The leper might very properly argue—To do this requires omnipotence; and once granted that omnipotence is at work, then omnipotence can as well deal with leprosy as with fever. Did he not reason well if he argued thus—What the Lord has done, he can do again: if in one case he has displayed almighty power, he can display that same power in another case? Thus would the acts of the Lord corroborate his words, and furnish a sure foundation for the leper's hope. My hearer, have you not seen Jesus save others? Have you not at least read of his miracles of grace? Believe him, then, for his works' sake, and say to him, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Besides, I think this man may have *heard something of the story of Christ*, and may have been familiar with the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. We cannot tell but some disciple may have informed him of John's witness concerning the Christ, and of the signs and tokens which supported John's testimony. He may thus have discerned in the Son of Man the Messiah of God, the Incarnate Deity. At any rate, as knowledge must come before faith, he had received knowledge enough to feel that he could trust this glorious personage, and to believe that, if he willed it, Jesus could make him clean. O my dear hearers, cannot you trust the Lord Jesus

Christ in this way? Do you not believe—I hope you do—that he is the Son of God; and if so, why not trust him? He that was born of Mary at Bethlehem was God over all, blessed forever! Do you not believe this? Why, then, do you not rely upon God in our nature? You believe in his consecrated life, his suffering death, his resurrection, his ascension, his sitting in power at the right hand of the Father; why do you not trust him? God hath highly exalted him; and caused all fulness to dwell in him: he is able to save unto the uttermost, why do you not come to him? Believe that he is able, and then with all thy sins before thee, red like scarlet—and with all thy sinful habits, and thy evil propensities before thee, ingrained like the leopard's spots—believe that the Saviour of men can at once make thee whiter than snow as to past guilt, and free from the present and future tyranny of evil. A divine Saviour must be able to cleanse thee from all sin. Only Jesus can do it—but he can do it—do it himself alone, do it now, do it in thee, do it with a word. If Jesus wills to do it, it is all that is wanted; for his will is the will of the Almighty Lord. Say, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Faith must be fixed alone on Jesus. None other name is given among men whereby we must be saved. I do pray the Lord to give that faith to all my dear friends present this morning who as yet have not received cleansing at the Lord's hands. Jesus is God's ultimatum of salvation: the unique hope of guilty men both as to pardon and renewal. Accept him even now.

IV. Now let me go a step further: THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD RESPECT TO A REAL, MATTER-OF-FACT CURE. He did not think of the Lord Jesus Christ as a priest who would perform certain ceremonies over him, and formally

say, "Thou art clean;" for that would not have been true. He wanted really to be delivered from the leprosy; to have those dry scales, into which his skin kept turning, taken all away, that his flesh might become as the flesh of a little child; he wanted that the rottenness which was eating up his body should be stayed, and that health should be actually restored. Friends, it is easy enough to believe in a mere priestly absolution if you have enough credulity; but we need more than this. It is very easy to believe in Baptismal Regeneration, but what is the good of it? What practical result does it produce? A child remains the same after it has been baptismally regenerated as it was before, and it grows up to prove it. It is easy to believe in Sacramentarianism if you are foolish enough; but there is nothing in it when you believe in it. No sanctifying power comes with outward ceremonials in and of themselves. To believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can make us love the good things which once we despised, and shun those evil things in which we once took pleasure—this is to believe in him indeed and of a truth. Jesus can totally change the nature, and make a sinner into a saint. This is faith of a practical kind; this is a faith worth having.

None of us would imagine that this leper meant that the Lord Jesus could make him feel comfortable in remaining a leper. Some seem to fancy that Jesus came to let us go on in our sins with a quiet conscience; but he did nothing of the kind. His salvation is cleansing from sin, and if we love sin we are not saved from it. We cannot have justification without sanctification. There is no use in quibbling about it; there must be a change, a radical change, a change of heart, or else we are not saved. I put it now to you, Do you desire a

moral and a spiritual change, a change of life, thought and motive? This is what Jesus gives. Just as this leper needed a thorough physical change, so do you need an entire renewal of your spiritual nature, so as to become a new creature in Jesus Christ. Oh that many here would desire this, for it would be a cheering sign. The man who desires to be pure is beginning to be pure; the man who sincerely longs to conquer sin has struck the first blow already. The power of sin is shaken in that man who looks to Jesus for deliverance from it. The man who frets under the yoke of sin will not long be a slave to it; if he can believe that Jesus Christ is able to set him free, he shall soon quit his bondage. Some sins which have hardened down into habits, yet disappear in a moment when Jesus Christ looks upon a man in love. I have known many instances of persons who, for many years, had never spoken without an oath, or a filthy expression, who, being converted, have never been known to use such language again, and have scarcely ever been tempted in that direction. This is one of the sins which seem to die at the first shot, and it is a very wonderful thing it should be so. Others I have known so altered at once that the very propensity which was strongest in them has been the last to annoy them afterwards: they have had such a reversion of the mind's action that, while other sins have worried them for years, and they have had to set a strict watch against them, yet their favorite and dominant sin has never again had the slightest influence over them, except to excite an outburst of horror and deep repentance. Oh, that you had faith in Jesus that he could thus cast down and cast out your reigning sins! Believe in the conquering arm of the Lord Jesus, and he will do it. Conversion is the

standing miracle of the church. Where it is genuine, it is as clear a proof of divine power going with the gospel as was the casting out of devils, or even the raising of the dead in our Lord's day. We see these conversions still; and have proof that Jesus is able to work great moral marvels still. O my hearer, where art thou? Canst thou not believe that Jesus is able to make a new man of thee? O brethren, who have been saved, I entreat you to breathe a prayer at this time for those who are not yet cleansed from the foul disease of sin. Pray that they may have grace to believe in the Lord Jesus for purification of heart, pardon of sin, and the implantation of eternal life. Then when faith is given, the Lord Jesus will work their sanctification, and none shall effectually hinder. In silence let us pray for a moment. (Here there was a pause, and silent prayer went up to heaven.)

V. And now we will go another step: THIS MAN'S FAITH WAS ATTENDED WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE A HESITANCY. But, after thinking it over a good deal, I am hardly inclined to think it such a hesitancy as many have judged it to be. He said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." There was an "if" in this speech, and that "if" has aroused the suspicions of many preachers. Some think it supposes that he doubted our Lord's willingness. I hardly think that the language justly bears so harsh a construction. What he meant may have been this—"Lord, I do not know yet that thou art sent to heal lepers; I have not seen that thou hast ever done so; but still, if it be within the compass of thy commission, I believe thou wilt do it, and assuredly thou canst if thou wilt. Thou canst heal not only some lepers, but me in particular; thou canst make me clean." Now, I think

this was a legitimate thing for him to say, as he had not seen a leper healed—"If it be within the compass of thy commission, I believe thou canst make me whole."

Moreover, I admire in this text *the deference which the leper pays to the sovereignty of Christ's will as to the bestowal of his gifts.* "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;"—as much as to say, "I know thou hast a right to distribute these great favors exactly as thou pleasest. I have no claim upon thee; I cannot say that thou art bound to make me clean; I appeal to thy pity and free favor. The matter remains with thy will." The man had never read the text which saith. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," for it was not yet written; but he had in his mind the humble spirit suggested by that grand truth. He owned that grace must come as a free gift of God's good pleasure when he said, "Lord, if thou wilt." Beloved, we need never raise a question as to the Lord's will to give grace when we have the will to receive it; but still, I would have every sinner feel that he has no claim upon God for anything. O sinner, if the Lord should give thee up, as he did the heathen described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, thou deservest it. If he should never look upon thee with an eye of love, what couldst thou say against his righteous sentence? Thou hast wilfully sinned, and thou deservest to be left in thy sin. Confessing all this, we still cling to our firm belief in the power of grace, and cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." We appeal to our Saviour's pitying love, relying upon his boundless power.

See, also, how the leper, to my mind, *really speaks without any hesitancy,* if you understand him. He does not say, "Lord, if thou puttest out thy hand, thou canst

make me clean;" nor, "Lord, if thou speakest, thou canst make me clean;" but only, "Lord, *if thou wilt*, thou canst make me clean:" thy mere will can do it. Oh, splendid faith! If you are inclined to spy a little halting in it, I would have you admire it for running so well with a lame foot. If there was a weakness anywhere in his faith, still it was so strong that the weakness only manifests its strength. Sinner, it is so; and I pray God that thy heart may grasp it—if the Lord wills it he can make thee clean. Believest thou this? If so, carry out practically what thy faith will suggest to thee—namely, that thou come to Jesus and plead with him, and get from him the cleansing which thou needest. To that end I am hoping to lead thee, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

VI. In the sixth place, notice that THIS MAN'S FAITH HAD EARNEST ACTION FLOWING OUT OF IT. Believing that, if Jesus willed, he could make him clean, what did the leper do? At once he came to Jesus. I know not from what distance, but he came as near to Jesus as he could. Then we read that he besought him; that is to say, he pleaded, and pleaded, and pleaded again. He cried, "Lord, cleanse me! Lord, heal my leprosy!" Nor was this all; he fell on his knees and worshipped; for we read, "Kneeling down to him." He not only knelt, but knelt to Jesus. He had no difficulty as to paying him divine honor. He worshipped the Lord Christ, paying him reverent homage. He then went on to honor him by an open acknowledgment of his power, his marvellous power, his infinite power, by saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." I should not wonder if some that stood by began to smile at what they thought the poor man's fanatical credulity. They

murmured, "What a poor fool this leper is, to think that Jesus of Nazareth can cure him of his leprosy!" Such a confession of faith had seldom been heard. But whatever critics and sceptics might think, this brave man boldly declared, "Lord, this is my confession of faith: I believe that, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Now, poor soul, thou that art full of guilt, and hardened in sin, and yet anxious to be healed, look straight away to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is here now. In the preaching of the gospel he is with us alway. With the eyes of thy mind behold him, for he beholdeth thee. Thou knowest that he lives, even though thou seest him not. Believe in this living Jesus; believe for perfect cleansing. Cry to him, worship him, adore him, trust him. He is very God of very God; bow before him, and cast thyself upon his mercy. Go home, and on thy knees say, "Lord, I believe that thou canst make me clean." He will hear your cry, and will save you. There will be no interval between your prayer and the gracious reward of faith, of which I am now to speak.

VII. Lastly, HIS FAITH HAD ITS REWARD. Have patience with me just a minute. The reward of this man's faith was, first, that *his very words were treasured up.* Matthew, Mark, Luke, all three of them record the precise words which this man used: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." They evidently did not see so much to find fault with in them as some have done; on the contrary, they thought them gems to be placed in the setting of their gospels. Three times over are they recorded, because they are such a splendid confession of faith for a poor diseased leper to have made. I believe that God is as much glorified by that one sentence of the leper as by the song of Cherubim and Seraphim, when

they continually do cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." A sinner's lips declaring his confident faith in God's own Son can breathe sonnets unto God more sweet than those of the angelic choirs. This man's first faith-words are folded up in the fair linen of three evangels, and laid up in the treasury of the house of the Lord. God values the language of humble confidence.

His next reward was, that *Jesus echoed his words.* He said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;" and Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean." As an echo answers to the voice, so did Jesus to his supplicant. The Lord Jesus was so pleased with this man's words that he caught them as they leaped out of his mouth, and used them himself, saying, "I will; be thou clean." If you can only get, then, as far as this leper's confession, I believe that our Lord Jesus from his throne above will answer to your prayer.

So potent were the words of this leper that *they moved our Lord very wonderfully.* Read the forty-first verse: "And Jesus, moved with compassion." The Greek word here used, if I were to pronounce it in your hearing, would half suggest its own meaning. It expresses a stirring of the entire manhood, a commotion in all the inward parts. The heart and all the vitals of the man are in active movement. The Saviour was greatly moved. You have seen a man moved, have you not? When a strong man is unable any longer to restrain himself, and is forced to give way to his feelings, you have seen him tremble all over, and at last burst out into an evident break-down. It was just so with the Saviour: his pity moved him, his delight in the leper's faith mastered him When he heard the man speak with such confidence in him, the Saviour was moved with a sacred passion, which

as it was in sympathy with the leper, is called "compassion." Oh, to think that a poor leper should have such power over the divine Son of God! Yet, my hearer, in all thy sin and misery, if thou canst believe in Jesus, thou canst move the heart of thy blessed Saviour. Yea, even now his bowels yearn towards thee.

No sooner was our Lord Jesus thus moved than *out went his hand*, and he touched the man and healed him immediately. It did not require a long time for the working of the cure; but the leper's blood was cooled and cleansed in a single second. Our Lord could work this miracle, and make all things new in the man; for "all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He restored the poor, decaying, putrefying body of this man, and he was cleansed at once. To make him quite sure that he was cleansed, the Lord Jesus bade him go to the priest, and seek a certificate of health. He was so clean that he might be examined by the appointed sanitary authority, and come off without suspicion. The cure which he had received was a real and radical one, and therefore he might go away at once, and get the certificate of it. If our converts will not bear practical tests, they are worth nothing; let even our enemies judge whether they are not better men and women when Jesus has renewed them. If Jesus saves a sinner, he does not mind all men testing the change. Jesus does not seek display, but he seeks examination from those able to judge. Our converts will bear the test. Come hither, angels! Come hither, pure intelligences, able to observe men in secret! Here is a wretch of a sinner who came hither this morning. He seemed first cousin to the devil; but the Lord Jesus Christ has converted him and changed him. Now look

at him, ye angels; look at him at home in his chamber! Watch him in private life. We can read your verdict. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" and this proves what you think. It is such a wonderful change, and angels are so sure of it, that they give their certificates at once. How do they give their certificates? Why, each one manifests his joy as he sees the sinner turning from his sinful ways. Oh, that the angels might have work of this kind to do this morning! Dear hearer, may you be one over whom they rejoice! If thou believest on Jesus Christ, and if thou wilt trust him, as the sent One of God, fully and entirely with thy soul, he will make thee clean. Behold him on the cross, and see sin put away. Behold him risen from the dead, and see new life bestowed. Behold him enthroned in power, and see evil conquered. I am ready to be bound for my Lord, to be his surety, that if thou, my hearer, wilt come to him, he will make thee clean. Believe thy Saviour, and thy cure is wrought. God help thee, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

II.

HOLDING FAST THE FAITH.

February 5, 1888.

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write: These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."—REVELATION II. 12, 13.

YOUR attention will be principally asked to these words —"Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Specially note, dear friends, at the opening of this morning's meditation, the character under which the Lord Jesus Christ presents himself to the church at Pergamos. "These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." Does the Lord Jesus come to his church in that way? Does he at the door of the church bear a sword? a sword unscabbarded? a sharp sword? a sharp sword with two edges? Yes, even to his visible church this is how our Lord Jesus Christ appears. To his own spiritual and faithful ones he is to each one a husband, full of unutterable tenderness and love; but to the visible church, which at its best estate is never altogether pure, he appears in severer form. To a church he comes as Captain of the Lord's host, and he wields a sharp sword with two edges. It is the parallel of that passage where John the Baptist saith of him:

"His fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and he will gather his wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." That winnowing fan is never out of his hand, for it is always needed. Even though our Lord is full of grace, he is also full of truth. His love to his servants manifests itself in a burning jealousy which will not endure evil. "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." We think of the coming of our Lord as a joy and a blessing; but, oh, remember that question, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" The Lord bears the sword, and he beareth it not in vain. Time has not blunted its edge, it is "sharp;" and it hath two edges, as of old.

But what will he do with that sword in reference to a church? We are not left in any doubt upon that point. Having mentioned some whose doctrines and lives were unclean, the Lord says, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." He turns the sword against those within the church who had no right to be there. It is no trifling thing to be a church member. I could earnestly wish that certain professors had never been members of a church at all; for if they had been outside the church, they might have been in far less peril than they are within its bounds. Outside their conduct might have been tolerated; but it is not consistent with an avowal of discipleship towards Jesus. I say this with deep sorrow. O false professors, you may go down to hell readily enough without increasing your damnation by coming into Christ's church with a lie in your right hand. Alas for those who are not Christians in heart, and yet profess

to be so! Such ought to be startled by the vision of the Lord himself drawing near to a church with a sharp sword in his hand. Surely, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites."

Yet is there comfort to the sincere in this glorious man of war. He will smite those who are the enemies of his holy cause, but he will also beat off those who attack his people from without. His sword is for the defence of the faithful. It is drawn from its sheath to protect the timid and the trembling. Jesus is come as our Joshua, to chase the enemy before us, and lead us onward, conquering and to conquer. The sword with two edges is the defender of the least of those whose hearts are right before the Lord. I introduce the subject as the Spirit himself introduces it. I would make the sermon sweet to the saints, but the preface must needs be sharp, lest any seize upon comforts to which they have no right. The Paschal Lamb is always to be eaten with bitter herbs: those bitter herbs I have set upon the table. The name of Jesus, which is the song of angels and the treasure of saints, has terror in it to those who refuse him; for he who bears that name shall judge the quick and dead, and pronounce condemnation on the unrighteous.

Notice that this blessed Saviour watches his church with an observant eye. He looks at the church in Pergamos, and he says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The Lord sees the position and the peril of the church at Pergamos, "where Satan dwelleth." Probably there were horrible idolatries, with obscene orgies, in the city, or it may have been a place of peculiar licentiousness, or of special persecution. We cannot at this distance of time exactly tell what it was; but the Lord regarded it as the citadel of Satan.

There are places in the world at this day where sin has so much the upper hand, or where error and unbelief reign so supreme, that the devil would seem to have there taken up his residence, and to have made it his capital city. This is a trying neighborhood for a church of Christ, and yet it is the place where it is most wanted. You, dear friend, may be living in society where the evil one rules with undisputed sway. You are not favored to dwell with your fellow Christians, but you go home to be met with blasphemies at the door; and all the week sights and sounds assail your eyes and ears which make you feel like Lot in Sodom. I am sorry for you; but let it comfort you that your Lord knows all about it, and he can either remove you from the trying position, or else he can still more glorify his grace by supporting you in it, and enabling you to overcome the enemy. He knows that "Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat;" and he prays for you that your faith fail not. He knows your perils, and he considers your trials. Right well he perceives the way in which Satan would first mislead you, and then accuse you. The subtlety of the old serpent he understands. He sees your struggles, your failures and your desperate endeavors to hold fast the faith. He knows how at night you are grieved as you make confession before him of your shortcomings; but he knows also the peculiar circumstances in which you are placed, and he judges you in great mercy. If you are holding fast his name and have not denied the faith, even *that* may be to him a surer proof of your truthfulness of heart than works of labor and patience might be in other instances. You have borne fewer clusters than another vine, but Jesus knows that you grow in a very barren bit of ground, and he thinks well of your lit-

tle fruit. Your day's work does not look much when it is done, but when horses plough a rock so hard that it breaks the ploughshare, no husbandman expects so much to be done as when a light loam has to be gently turned over. The Lord Jesus takes all our surroundings into consideration, and though he loves us too well to make excuse for our sins, yet he himself mentions the circumstances which make our act to be rather failure than fault, even as he did for the first disciples when he found them asleep, and he said, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." O dear children of God, if you are placed in positions of peculiar trial and difficulty, and if your hindrances are so many that you cannot accomplish one-tenth as much as you desire, then hear how Jesus puts it: "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." If you are faithful to your Lord, and firm in his truth, he will commend you and say, "Yet thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." I wonder whether this word of comfort is meant for somebody here, or for some friend who will read the sermon. I feel that it must be so. Many of our Lord's beloved ones are, in God's sight, now doing much more, under distressing circumstances, than they used to do in happier days. When they had ten pounds entrusted to them, they brought in two by way of interest; and now that they have only one pound, they bring in one pound of interest: thus you see that they produce a far larger percentage than they used to do; and this is the Lord's way of calculating, for it is according to righteousness. When we have little strength, and are placed in positions of great difficulty, then the Lord thinks all the more of what we produce, and regards it as all the surer proof of fidelity. In the text it is commendation enough for Per-

gamos, under the circumstances that, dwelling so close to Beelzebub's own capital, close under the shadow of the throne of hell, that church could earn this praise: "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Let us give earnest attention to this commendation. Oh, that we may earn it ourselves; and if we have already earned it, may we be helped by the Holy Spirit to hold it fast, so that no man take our crown!

I. The first head will be, LET US CONSIDER THIS FACT. I hope it is a fact with many here present as surely as it was a fact with Pergamos. I trust it can be said of this church and of its members—"Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Notice, dear friends, that *the name of Christ is here made to be identical with the faith of Christ.* "Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." The faith of Scripture has Christ for its centre, Christ for its circumference, and Christ for its substance. The name—that is, the person, the character, the work, the teaching of Christ—this is the faith of Christians. The great doctrines of the gospel are all intimately connected with the Lord Jesus Christ himself: they are the rays, and he is the sun. We never hold the faith correctly except as we see the Lord Jesus to be the centre of it. From our election onward to our glorification, Christ is all and in all. To the Jews the law was never in its proper place until it was laid in the ark, and covered with the mercy seat; and I am sure believers never see the law aright till they see it fulfilled in Christ Jesus. If it be so with the law, how much more is it so with the gospel? The gospel is the gold ring, but Christ Jesus is the diamond which is set in it. Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith: he is the sum and substance, the top

and bottom of it. When we hold fast the name of our Lord, then we have not denied the faith.

But *how may the faith be denied?* In several ways this may be done. Let me say it very tenderly, but very solemnly, some deny the faith, and let go the name of Jesus *by never confessing it.* Remember how the Lord puts this matter in the gospels: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Here it is clear that to deny is the same thing as not confessing. I know people who almost boast of their neutrality. They say, "I hold my tongue. Though the conflict should lie between Christ and Belial, yet I would go quietly on and never involve myself." Say you so? Then permit me to remind you of our Lord's own words. "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Again he says, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." This text must bear hard upon those who have tried not exactly to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, but neither to hold with the hare nor yet to run with the hounds. These have hoped to find in their discretion the better part of valor; but, believe me, it is a valor which will be rewarded with everlasting contempt. This way you hope to lead an easy life. An easy life of such a kind will end in a very uneasy death. A life in which we have shunned the cross of Christ will lead to a state in which we shall miss the crown of glory.

Christ is also denied *by false doctrine.* If we espouse error as to his person, work, or doctrine, and believe what Jesus did not teach, and refuse to believe what

Jesus did teach, then we have denied his name and his faith. One of the main points of a Christian, without which the rest of his life will not be acceptable with God, is that Jesus shall be to him "the way, the truth, and the life." The practical, the doctrinal, the experimental must all be found by us in Jesus Christ our Lord, or else we have not placed him in his right position; and we cannot be right anywhere unless the centre is right, and unless Jesus is that centre. God grant that we may never turn aside from the faith once for all delivered to the saints; but may we resist all false philosophies, steadfast and immovable!

But then it is very possible to deny the name and the faith *by unholy living*. Let none of us imagine that an orthodox creed can be of any use to us if we lead a heterodox life. No, Christ Jesus is to be obeyed as a Master, as well as to be believed as a Teacher. The disciple is to be practically obedient, as well as attentively teachable. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The apostle Paul somewhere says, "He that careth not for his own household hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (or unbeliever);" so that a moral fault may be a denial of the faith, and may make a man worse than if he had never professed to believe at all. God save us from an unholy life!

Alas! we can deny the faith *by actually forsaking it*, and quitting the people of God. Some do so deliberately, and others because the charms of the world overcome them. We are told of some who went away from our Lord because of what he had taught. They cried, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" My friends, if you are not prepared to accept hard sayings, you need not profess to be disciples of Jesus. "Horrible doctrine!"

cried one the other day. Granted that it is horrible, may it not also be true? Many horrible things take place around us, and yet none can deny the facts. You cannot exclude from your knowledge many things which are true by merely crying "Horrible!" It is not ours to judge of our Lord's teaching by our sentiment, we are to receive it by faith. He speaks terribly of the doom of the wicked, and he is not capable of exaggeration. What the Lord Jesus says is certain, for "he is the faithful and true witness," and therefore we will not turn from him, whatever his teaching may be. Oh for grace to persevere to the end! Oh for fidelity and constancy, so that neither gain nor loss, exaltation nor depression, may induce us to quit our Saviour! Let us hold fast his sacred name, and never deny the faith, come what may. May the Holy Spirit hold us fast, that we may hold fast the name of Jesus!

In what way may we be said to hold fast the name of Christ and the faith of Christ? I answer, *by the full consent of our intellect,* yielding up our mind to consider and accept the things which are assuredly believed among us. We hold fast the form of sound words, and accept whatsoever God has revealed, because he has revealed it. Our motto is, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

When Christ speaks, we assent with our minds and consent with our hearts to all he declares.

If we hold fast the name of Jesus, we must hold the faith *in the love of it.* We must store up in our affections all that our Lord teaches. His words are found, and we do eat them, they are as honey to the taste. Let Jesus speak, and I will reply, "Yea, Lord, thou sayest it is so, and I know it is so. I consent to thy teaching, and from my soul I love thee, and accept all that thou dost reveal."

For the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture the true believer would live or die. This love of the heart is that which causes us to hold fast the name of Christ.

We also hold it fast *by holding it forth* in the teeth of all opposition. We must confess the faith at all proper times and seasons, and we must never hide our colors. There are times when we must dash to the front and court the encounter, when we see that our Captain's honor demands it. Let us never be either ashamed or afraid. Our Lord Jesus deserves that we should yield ourselves as willing sacrifices in defence of his faith. Ease, reputation, life itself, must go for the name and faith of Jesus. If in the heat of the battle our good name or our life must be risked to win the victory, then let us say, "In this battle some of us must fall; why should not I? I will take part and lot with my Master, and bear reproach for his sake." Only brave soldiers are worthy of our great Lord. Those who sneak into the rear, that they may be comfortable, are not worthy of the kingdom. What will our Captain say of cowards in that day when he distributes rewards to his faithful ones? Brethren, we must be willing to bear ridicule for Christ's sake, even that peculiarly envenomed ridicule which "the cultured" are so apt to pour upon us. We must be willing to be thought great fools for Jesus' sake. Some of us have forgotten more than many of our opponents ever knew, and yet they style us ignorant; we are bearing shame because we have the courage of our convictions, and yet they call us cowards. For my part, I am willing to be ten thousand fools in one for my dear Lord and Master, and count it to be the highest honor that can be put upon me to be stripped of every honor, and loaded with every censure for the sake of the grand old truth which is written on my

very heart. Those ships which sail with Jesus as their Lord High Admiral must look for tempests: for his barque was filled with the waves, and began to sink. Doth that man love his Lord who would be willing to see Jesus wearing a crown of thorns, while for himself he craves a chaplet of laurel? Shall Jesus ascend to his throne by the cross, and do we expect to be carried there on the shoulders of applauding crowds? Be not so vain in your imagination. Count you the cost, and if you are not willing to bear Christ's cross, go away to your farm and to your merchandise, and make the most of them; only let me whisper this in your ear, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

II. In the second place, having considered the fact, LET US FURTHER ENLARGE UPON IT.

What do we mean by holding fast the name of Christ? I reply, first, we mean *holding fast the Deity of that name.* We believe in our Lord's real Godhead. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God." One of the names by which he is revealed to us is Immanuel. The word "El" is one of the great Oriental names of God. You get in Hebrew Elohim, and in Arabic "Allah." Our Lord Jesus is Immanu-*el*, that is, God with us; and we believe him to be so. He is as truly man as any one among us; born of a virgin without taint of original sin. But he is also most surely God without the least diminution of the perfections and glories of Godhead. We put our finger into the print of the nails, but as we do so we cry, "My Lord, and my God." "Let all the angels of God worship him." "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and

every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." We can never give up our belief in the Godhead of our Lord Jesus, but we must and will hold fast the faith of the Deity of Christ.

We also hold fast the name of Jesus, and the faith of Jesus, as *to the royalty of his name*. He was born King of the Jews, and he is also "King of kings, and Lord of lords." That which Pilate wrote over his cross is true —"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; but God also hath highly exalted him, and made him to have dominion over all the works of his hands. The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He shall put down all rule, and all authority, and power, for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever: Hallelujah"! When we bow the knee in prayer, and say, "Thy kingdom come," we mean the kingdom of God, and we mean also the kingdom of Christ Jesus. He it is that as a Lamb is seen in the midst of the throne where saints and angels pay adoring homage. Soon shall the seventh angel sound his trumpet, and great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." O Jesus, we bow before thee! "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." He reigns in our hearts over the triple kingdom of our nature. He is King in our families; we desire to see him King in this city, King in this nation, King over all the earth; and we shall never be satisfied till, with all the redeemed of our race, we crown him Lord of all. We hold fast the royalty of the name of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, we believe in *the grandeur of that name*, as

being the first and the last. Open the New Testament, and read the first verse of Matthew. How does it begin? "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David." The book of the New Covenant begins with Jesus. Now look at the last verse, see how the Testament ends: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." Jesus Christ appears in the first verse, and he appears in the last verse. Did he not say, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"? The first line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; the last line of the covenant of grace is Jesus Christ; and all in between is the Lord Jesus Christ. Begin with him as A, go right through to B, C, D, E, F, and so on till you end with Z, and it is all Christ Jesus. He is all; yea he is all in all. Oh what blessings have come to us through Jesus Christ! Through his name we have received remission of sins, in his name we are justified, in his name we are sanctified, in his name we shall be glorified, even as in him we were chosen from before the foundation of the world. My tongue can never tell you even the commencement of his greatness. Who shall declare his generation? The fringe, the hem of his infinite glories, who can touch? He is unspeakable. As for his glory, I may say, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." All glory and honor be unto him in whom are comprehended all the blessings whereby God hath enriched his people in time and in eternity.

We hold fast the name of Christ as we believe in its saving power. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." We hold fast the belief that Jesus saves us from the guilt of sin by having borne it in his own body on the tree. We are assured

that he makes us just before God by that righteousness of his, which is ours, because we are one with him. He saves us from the punishment of sin because "the chastisement of our peace was upon him." He died as a victim in our stead. He saves us from the power of sin by his Spirit, and by faith in his death: we overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. Salvation in every department, salvation from its hopeful dawning to its glorious noontide in perfection, is all of Christ Jesus. He is Saviour, and he alone. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He is the unique Saviour, there is no other possible salvation now or in the world to come. Believest thou in Christ? Then thou hast salvation. "But he that believeth not shall be damned." Pronounce the word hard or soft as thou wilt, it will come to the same thing in the end—thou shalt be condemned, and condemned hopelessly, if thou believest not in Jesus Christ, the one sole propitiation for the sins of men. This we hold fast. I know you are established in these truths, my beloved, and you mean to hold them as long as you breathe, and not to deny the faith which the Lord himself has delivered to you.

Once more, we hold fast this name *in its immutability*. We are told to-day that this is an age of progress, and therefore we must accept an improved gospel. Every man is to be his own lawyer, and every man his own saviour. We are getting on in the direction of every man putting away his own sin, just as every chimney should consume its own smoke. But, dear friends, we do not believe these idle dreams. We want no new gospel, no modern salvation. Our conviction is that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The way that Paul went to heaven is good enough for me.

> "The way the holy prophets went,
> The road that lead from banishment,"

is broad enough and safe enough for me. When I remember my dear brethren and sisters in Christ who have fallen asleep, whom I saw die with triumph lighting up their faces, I feel quite content with the salvation which saved them, and I am not going to try experiments or speculations. To talk of improving upon our perfect Saviour is to insult him. He is God's propitiation; what would you more? My blood boils with indignation at the idea of improving the gospel. There is but one Saviour, and that one Saviour is the same for ever. His doctrine is the same in every age, and is not yea and nay. What a strange result we should obtain in the general assembly of heaven if some were saved by the gospel of the first century, and others by the gospel of the second, and others by the gospel of the seventeenth, and others by the gospel of the nineteenth century! We should need a different song of praise for the clients of these various periods, and the mingled chorus would be rather to the glory of man's culture than to the praise of the one Lord. No such mottled heaven, and no such discordant song, shall ever be produced. There is one church and one Saviour. We believe in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. To eternal glory there is but one way; to walk therein we must hold fast one truth, and be quickened by one life. We stand fast by the unaltered, unalterable, eternal name of Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we mean by holding fast the name and the faith of Jesus.

III. Thirdly, dear friends, to lead you a step further in the same road, LET ME SHOW THE PRACTICAL PLACE OF THE NAME AND OF THE FAITH WITH US.

The practical place of it is this: first of all, *it is our personal comfort*—

> "Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
> That bids our sorrows cease;
> 'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
> 'Tis life, and health, and peace."

The faith which we hold is our daily and hourly joy and hope. The doctrines which I believe in connection with the divine Person in whom I trust are the pillow of my weariness, the anodyne of my care, the rest of my spirit. Jesus gives me a look-out for years to come which is celestial, and at the same time I can look back with thankfulness on the years which are past. For all time the Lord Jesus is our heart's content. Nothing can separate us from his love, and therefore nothing can deprive us of our confident hope. Through this blessed name and this blessed faith believers are themselves made glad and strong. On the name of Jesus we feed, and in that name we wrap ourselves. It is strength for our weakness, yea, life for our death.

And then, dear friends, this name, this faith, these are *our message*. Our only business here below is to cry, "Behold the Lamb." Are any of you sent of God with any other message? It cannot be. The one message which God has given to his people to proclaim is salvation through the Lamb—salvation by the blood of Jesus. It is by his blood that cleansing comes to the polluted. He is the one great Propitiation. To tell of Jesus is our occupation, we have nothing to say which is not comprised in the revelation made to us by God in Christ Jesus. He who is our one comfort is also our one theme.

He also is *our divine authority* for holy work. We preach the gospel in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. If we preached it in any other name men would have a right to reject it. If the spiritual sick are healed, it is his name which makes them strong. If devils flee before us, we cast them out in his name. Oh, that we did more often remember that all our teaching and preaching must be done in the name of Jesus! In his name we gather for worship, in his name we go forth to service. If we go in our own name we go in vain; but if we are ambassadors for God, as though he did beseech men by us, then we pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God, and we are hopeful that our labors will not be in vain in the Lord.

This also is *our power* in preaching; indeed, it is our power, our only power in living before God. Brethren, the devil will never be cast out by any other name—let us hold it fast. If we conjure by eloquence, talent, music, or what not, the evil one will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" It is only his name that makes the legions of hell quit the bosoms of the possessed, and fly howling down into the deep. This is the name high over all; but there is none other which hath such power in it. Spiritual diseases, yea, death itself, will yield to this name. It is his name that makes Lazarus come forth from the grave, and the young man sit upright on the bier. Use this name, and nothing can stand before you.

I said that it is our power in life, and so, indeed, it is. When we draw near to God, what is our strength wherewith to prevail *in prayer?* Is it not that we ask in the name of Jesus? If you leave out the name of Jesus, what are your prayers but a sounding brass and a tink-

ling cymbal? Prayer without the name of Jesus has no wings with which to fly up to God. This is that golden ladder whereby we climb up to the throne of God, and take unspeakable precious things out of the hand of the Eternal. That name prevaileth with God concerning everything, and so enables us to prevail with man; wherefore, hold it fast, and deny not the faith; for what can you do if the truth and the name of Jesus be given up?

This name is our one *hope of victory.* As Constantine, in his dream, saw the cross, and took it for his emblem, with the motto, "By this sign I conquer," so to-day our only hope of victory for the gospel is that the cross of Christ displays it, and the name of Jesus is in it. His name is named on us, and in his name we will cast out devils, and do many mighty works, till his name shall be known and honored wherever the sun pursues his course, or the moon cheers the watches of the night.

IV. Now, in closing, I will URGE REASONS FOR HOLDING FAST THE NAME AND FAITH OF JESUS. I hope we hold it so fast that we can never give it up while reason holds its throne. There is an old Christian legend concerning Ignatius, that he never spoke without mentioning the name of Jesus whom he loved. His speech seemed saturated with love to his Lord, and when he died the name of Jesus was found to be stamped on his heart. It may not have been so literally, but no doubt it was true spiritually. The name of Jesus is, I hope, written in our hearts so as to be inseparable from our lives. Whatever else may go, the name of Jesus can never depart from our thoughts. Dying men have been known to forget everything but this. The man has forgotten his wife, his children, his bosom friend, and has turned away

oblivious from them all, as if they were strangers; and yet when the name of Jesus has been whispered in his ear, his eyes have brightened, and his countenance has responded to that precious name. O memory, leave no other name than his recorded upon thy tablets! Happy forgetfulness which clears all else away, but leaves that name in solitary glory!

That it may be so I will put the question thus: *Why should we give up the faith?* I fail to see a reason. Why should I change my belief, or cease to hold fast the name of Christ Jesus my Lord? It is an irrational suggestion. "I am open to conviction," said a man who knew his ground, "I am open to conviction, but I should like to see the man that could convince me." I am in very much the same condition with regard to the gospel of my Lord Jesus: I am open to conviction, but I shall never see the man that can convince me out of my experience, my conviction, my consciousness, my hope, my all. Before I could quit my faith in the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and my confidence in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, I should have to be ground to powder, and every separate atom transformed.

What would they give us in exchange for the faith? That is a question which it is easy to ask, but impossible to answer. Suppose the doctrines of grace could be obliterated, and our hope could be taken away, what would they give us in the place of them, either for this life or the next? I have never seen anything proposed in the place of the gospel that was worth considering for a second. Have you? Uncertainty, doubt, glitter, mockery, darkness — all these; but who wants them? They offer us either bubbles or filth, according to the

different shade of the speculator's character; but we are not enamored of either. We prefer gold to dross.

We must defend the faith; for *what would have become of us if our fathers had not maintained it?* If confessors, reformers, martyrs, and covenanters had been recreant to the name and faith of Jesus, where would have been the churches of to-day? Must we not play the man as they did? If we do not, are we not censuring our fathers? It is very pretty, is it not, to read of Luther and his brave deeds? Of course, everybody admires Luther! Yes, yes; but you do not want any one else to do the same to-day. When you go to the Zoological Gardens you all admire the bear; but how would you like a bear at home, or a bear wandering loose about the street? You tell me that it would be unbearable, and no doubt you are right. So, we admire a man who was firm in the faith, say four hundred years ago; the past ages are a sort of bear-pit or iron cage for him; but such a man to-day is a nuisance, and must be put down. Call him a narrow-minded bigot, or give him a worse name if you can think of one. Yet imagine that in those ages past, Luther, Zwingle, Calvin, and their compeers had said, "The world is out of order; but if we try to set it right we shall only make a great row, and get ourselves into disgrace. Let us go to our chambers, put on our night-caps, and sleep over the bad times; and perhaps when we wake up things will have grown better." Such conduct on their part would have entailed upon us a heritage of error. Age after age would have gone down into the infernal deeps, and the pestiferous bogs of error would have swallowed all. These men loved the faith and the name of Jesus too well to see them trampled on. Note what we owe them, and let us pay to our sons the

debt we owe our fathers. It is to-day as it was in the Reformers' days. Decision is needed. Here is the day for the man, where is the man for the day? We who have had the gospel passed to us by martyr hands dare not trifle with it, nor sit by and hear it denied by traitors, who pretend to love it, but inwardly abhor every line of it. The faith I hold bears upon it marks of the blood of my ancestors. Shall I deny their faith, for which they left their native land to sojourn here? Shall we cast away the treasure which was handed to us through the bars of prisons, or came to us charred with the flames of Smithfield? Personally, when my bones have been tortured with rheumatism, I have remembered Job Spurgeon, doubtless of my own stock, who in Chelmsford Jail was allowed a chair, because he could not lie down by reason of rheumatic pain. That Quaker's broad-brim overshadows my brow. Perhaps I inherit his rheumatism; but that I do not regret if I have his stubborn faith which will not let me yield a syllable of the truth of God. When I think of how others have suffered for the faith, a little scorn or unkindness seems a mere trifle, not worthy of mention. An ancestry of lovers of the faith ought to be a great plea with us to abide by the Lord God of our fathers, and the faith in which they lived. As for me, I must hold the old gospel: I can do no other. God helping me, I will endure the consequences of what men think obstinacy.

Look you, sirs, *there are ages yet to come.* If the Lord does not speedily appear, there will come another generation, and another, and all these generations will be tainted and injured if we are not faithful to God and to his truth to-day. We have come to a turning-point in the road. If we turn to the right, mayhap our children and our

children's children will go that way; but if we turn to the left, generations yet unborn will curse our names for having been unfaithful to God and to his Word. I charge you, not only by your ancestry, but by your posterity, that you seek to win the commendation of your Master, that though you dwell where Satan's seat is, you yet hold fast his name, and do not deny his faith. God grant us faithfulness, for the sake of the souls around us! How is the world to be saved if the church is false to her Lord? How are we to lift the masses if our fulcrum is removed? If our gospel is uncertain, what remains but increasing misery and despair? Stand fast, my beloved, in the name of God! I, your brother in Christ, entreat you to abide in the truth. Quit yourselves like men, be strong. The Lord sustain you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

III.

ABRAM'S CALL; OR, HALF-WAY AND ALL THE WAY.

February 26, 1888.

"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there."—GENESIS xi. 31.

"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."—GENESIS xii. 5.

AFTER the flood, when men began to multiply and increase in the earth, it was not very long before they began to turn aside from the living and true God. At first the sons of Noah walked in the light of divine knowledge, though even among them was found an evil seed. When scattered over the earth after the confusion of tongues at Babel, the earth's hoar fathers carried with them a measure of the knowledge of God which they had received from their sires; but after a while, the light grew dim, men began to worship the sun and the moon, and they adored fire as the mystic symbol of the mysterious and spiritual Lord. They sought out many inventions; and having once begun to quit their allegiance to the one God, they very rapidly travelled along the down-grade till they worshipped strange gods. It was sad that although the earth produced its mighty hunters, and men built city after city, yet few among them sought after God, or builded altars to his name. Well might the Lord

God cry out, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

A long period passed without a voice from God. Man seemed left to himself, and in danger of being given up to idols. The nations wandered each a different way, but all the downward road. Yet grace had not ended its reign; and therefore, before the lamp of God had wholly gone out, the Lord determined to reveal himself, and establish his worship in the world. He would select a family to be his peculiar servants; he would manifest himself to the father of that family, and would make with him a covenant. He would reveal to him the great things which he intended to do in the fulness of time, and he would bid him hand down the revelation to his children from generation to generation. This family should grow into a nation, and to that nation should be committed the oracles of God. Out of that nation should come prophets, and priests, and heroes, who should believe in God and maintain the true faith against all comers, even until the Son of God himself should come to manifest the glory of God in a pre-eminent degree. In the midst of that nation the Lord resolved to set up ordinances, and a settled organization, by which truth should be taught through type and symbol, and by the hallowed speech of godly men. This, in his wisdom, he judged to be best for the future of the race.

In the wise sovereignty of his choice, the Lord chose Abram and his house. He giveth no account of his matters, and we cannot, therefore, tell why he took out of Ur of the Chaldees those of whom Joshua says, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor:

and they served other gods." The Lord called Abram alone, and blessed him. He set apart the patriarch and his seed, and put them in trust with the priceless treasure of divine revelation: this they kept for themselves and for the rest of mankind.

It was needful that the elect family should be led apart and kept from the contamination of surrounding evil. Abram must come out from Ur of the Chaldees, and all its associations of idolatry, and he must even leave his kindred and his father's house, and walk before the Lord in separation unto prompt obedience and complete consecration. Thus in his separation unto God would be fulfilled the gracious purpose of the Most High. The Lord's end and aim was to keep his truth alive in the world by means of a people who should be set apart for that service; and it was therefore essential that the person chosen to be the head of that family, the founder of that nation, should come right away from all connection with the corrupt world, and walk apart with God. The chosen nation was to dwell alone, and not to be numbered among the peoples. Hence came that call which said to Abram, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."

At this moment God is working in much the same manner in the midst of the world by his church. A church is an assembly called out. An *ecclesia* is not any and every "assembly;" a mixed crowd of unauthorized persons, having no special right to come together would not be an ecclesia, or church. In a real ecclesia the herald summoned the citizens and burgesses by trumpet

or by name, and it consisted of certain persons called out from among the common multitude. The true church consists of men who are called, and faithful, and chosen. They are redeemed from among men, and called out from among their fellows by effectual grace. God the Holy Spirit continues to call out, and bring to the Lord Jesus, those who are chosen of God according to the good pleasure of his will. Practically, conversion is the result of the call—"Get thee out from thy country." It is a repetition of that searching word, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The church is a repetition of the camp of Abram in the midst of Canaan. It is the Lord's portion among men, and it keeps his oracles. The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth; and it is the design of God to find a home for his gospel in his church, till the dispensation of grace shall close, and the Judge shall ascend the throne.

In gathering instruction from the call and outcoming of Abram, I shall handle the matter by making three remarks. First, *this call is often only half obeyed.* In our first text we find the command of God very partially carried out. Secondly, *this call is of a very special character,* and I shall endeavor to show the manner in which it comes to us at this time. Thirdly, *this call, when it is really obeyed, puts the obedient upon a special footing:* they are henceforth peculiarly the Lord's. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation!

I. In the first place, THIS CALL IS OFTEN ONLY HALF OBEYED. It came to Abram when he dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees; but though he so far hearkened to it as to set out for Canaan, yet we read that "they came to Haran, and dwelt there."

We do not know *how* the call came to Abram, whether by a voice which he heard with his ears, or by a mysterious impulse upon his mind, or by a dream or vision; but Stephen tells us, in the seventh of Acts—"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." There may have been given to Abram some such sight of the glory of God as Job had when he cried, "Now mine eye seeth thee." The Lord appeared to Abram, and made him to understand that he must emigrate from his country, and quit his tribe. Somehow or other, it was laid home to Abram's heart and conscience that he must go forth upon a journey he knew not whither; he must journey into another land, and no more dwell in city, or town, or village, but become a sojourner with his God, a tent-dweller, a stranger in a strange land.

His first step would naturally be to tell his friends that he must needs leave them, for the living God had called him to go into the land of Canaan. At once his difficulties began. His kindred could not bear to part with him. If they had distinctly opposed him, and said, "It is absurd; your talk is insanity; yet if you must be gone, go your way and welcome;" then he would have gone in sadness, but assuredly he would not have hesitated. A man possessed of Abram's wondrous faith would have torn himself away with great firmness, although with deep regret at the sorrow which he caused. Had they opposed him, his course would have been plain.

But he had to meet with a much more insidious evil. His friends consented to his zeal. Whether they agreed in his reverence for Jehovah or not, they felt that they could not cut themselves off from Abram, and therefore they resolved to go with him. The word to Abram was express, "Get thee out from thy kindred, and from thy

father's house"; but how was this to be done when his kindred and his father's house clung to him, and yielded to him? Very naturally his loving spirit could see no other way but to bid them all come with him, and yield themselves to God. Possibly Abram looked for great things from this, and rejoiced in it. It would seem as if his aged father Terah, with that wisdom which is a near approach to subtlety, himself led the way in the migration; for we read — "And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot, the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan." The father of the clan leads the way, and it is rather his migration than that of Abram. What was Abram to do? Instead of meeting opposition from his family, his own father is leading the way in the journey to Canaan. Did not this make his obedience easier? We shall see. Was not this happy union of the household, this undivided assent to the Lord's bidding, a great cause for rejoicing? It certainly appeared so; but all is not gold that glitters. What we think will help may at length hinder. What looks like a work of grace may turn out to be only the movements of unrenewed nature. Like the mixed multitude which came out of Egypt with Israel, we may have about us professed friends who may become our worst foes, in the secret of God's truth and grace.

In Abram's case the dreaded separation is spared: they start together for Canaan. So far so good; at least, it looks so. The travelling is wearisome, and many are the murmurings. The huge caravan has not gone very far before the proposal is made that they should be satisfied with the move which they had made, and remain at

Haran. True, it was not Canaan, but it might do as well. Did not the family reason, "We shall stay here. We have yielded a great many points to Abram in coming away from Ur. But we cannot yield to all his demands. We have proved our love to him and our reverence for the Lord, by coming thus far, and now we ask for a fair compromise. Abram is very sincere, but he must not be bigoted. Surely he will not be so foolish as to believe in verbal inspiration, and insist upon Canaan, when Haran quite meets the spirit of the command. There is no doubt Haran answers every purpose, and we mean to stay here, and Abram must stay with us." His father pleads that he is very old. To be moving continually is hard for aged people; and there is that broad Euphrates, how can the old man cross that dreaded flood? "Spare your venerable parent this last bitterness: I have come thus far to please you; do not press me further." I think I am not wildly imagining if I suppose that some such pleas induced the patriarch to tarry with his kindred at Haran. A loving and tender heart wrought against prompt literal obedience, and for a while the man of faith delayed, the heir of the promises hesitated. Do you blame him? It will be wiser to look at home. Holy Scripture describes his conduct, and appends no absolute word of censure; but it does what is quite as significant, it keeps silence as to anything like a record of blessing, or of communion with God, while Abram was at the halfway house at Haran. To a friend of God his silence is quite enough rebuke. If my friend does not smile, I do not require him to frown to let me know whereabouts I am in his esteem. If my friend no longer speaks to me, I do not need him to upbraid me, his silence is sadly eloquent to my heart.

Abram and the rest settled down at Haran. He was conquered, not by open foes, but by compromising friends. My brethren, take ye good heed unto yourselves, that ye suffer not your feet to be entangled by the men of your own household. He that would follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, must not know his own kindred when he comes to the parting of the ways. Honest wolves will not harm us one half so much as those who look like sheep, but inwardly are not so. Our first father, Adam, fell by the temptation of her whom he loved, and the old serpent still knows how to seduce through our affections and lead into ruin by the suggestion of friendship. O man of God, beware! Read my parable with open eye, and practise the lesson thereof.

Let me describe the consequences of tarrying at any half-way house. *To obey the Lord partially is to disobey him.* If the Lord bids Abram go to Canaan, he cannot fulfil that command by going to Haran. Haran was not mentioned in the call. You cannot keep God's command by doing something else which pleases you better. The essence of obedience lies in its exactness. Although something else may seem to you to be quite as good as the thing commanded, what has that to do with it. *This* is what God bids you, and to refuse the thing commanded, professing to substitute a better thing, is gross presumption. You may not think it so, but so it is, that half obedience is whole disobedience. We can only obey the Lord's command as it stands; to alter it is as great a treason as to make erasures in a king's statute-book. It is will-worship, and not God's worship, if I do what I choose of the Lord's work, and leave a part undone which does not please me quite so well.

Moreover, *half-way obedience increases our responsibility,*

because it is a plain confession that we know the Lord's will, though we do it not. Abram had received the call, and knew that he had done so, else why had he come to Haran? He admitted, by going as far as Haran, that he ought to go the whole way to Canaan; and so, by his own action he left himself without excuse. And any of you who are doing in a measure what is right because of the fear of God, and yet are acting in other matters contrary to what you know to be the Lord's will, you are left without apology for such neglect. By the service which you do render to God you admit that he has right to your obedience; why, then, do you not obey him in all things? You call Jesus your Lord, and do some of the things which he says, but why not the rest? Is it not clear that you know your Master's will and do it not? Thus, you see, there was failure in obedience, and increase of responsibility.

The result of this to Abram was the absence of privilege. God spoke not to his servant in Haran: neither dream, nor vision, nor voice came to him in the place of hesitancy. The Lord loved him, but hid his face from him, and denied him the visits of his grace. If we walk contrary to the Lord, he will walk contrary to us. Abram lived with his father Terah; but he was not living near his heavenly Father, and therefore he did not hear his voice. How greatly the true heart dreads this! How earnestly it sighs, "O Lord, be not silent to me, lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit!" O my brothers, let us not, by wavering and half-heartedness, lose our communion with the Lord our God.

Meanwhile, *Abram was rendering an affliction needful.* His father Terah must die that the cord which held

Abram might be broken. If the called one will not come out while the old man lives, death must do his work, and remove the cause of disobedience. If Abram fears to weep at parting with a living father, he must weep over his grave. One way or another the Lord will cause his chosen to obey him. Oh, that we would be tender of heart, and not be as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding! Whips and rods would seldom be heard of if we were more promptly obedient.

While tarrying at Haran, *Abram was creating cause of future disquietude* by his attachment to Lot. He was told to come out from his kindred, but he clung to his orphan nephew, and must needs accept his company. Lot caused him a great deal of trouble. His herdsmen created discontent and strife, and afterwards Lot, himself, was carried away captive, and peaceful Abram was compelled to gird on the warrior's sword, and go forth to battle, to rescue his nephew. Had Abram acted decidedly from the very first, he might have saved himself many a disquietude. My brethren, learn well these lessons. I merely hint them; will you not enlarge upon them?

All this while *Abram was delaying the great blessing which God was prepared to give him.* He was keeping out of the promised land, and away from the place where Jehovah would manifest himself to him, and enter into covenant with him. I fear that some true believers are depriving themselves of the richest joy and the most heavenly experience by their undecided conduct. Some of you have come away from your old sins, but you have not yet entered upon the new life in its fulness. You have left Ur of the Chaldees—the place of open sin; but you have not come to Canaan the holy. You are tarrying in the Haran of a partial obedience, which is neither

here nor there—a sort of death in life, rebellion in obedience, unbelief in faith. I know many professors who have left their vicious habits, but they are not yet consecrated to the Lord Jesus: they are not absolutely in the world, and yet they are not abiding in the Lord. Their speech is half of Ashdod and half of the Jews' language; they dare not be Philistines, and yet they will not be Israelites. They are willing to be saved by the cross of Christ, but they are not willing to take up Christ's cross, and come right out decidedly upon his side at all times. This is a perilous state to be in. They have enough religion to make them miserable, but I fear not enough to fit them for joys eternal. They may ultimately get into heaven by the skin of their teeth; at least, I hope so; but they have no present joy, no immediate peace, no conscious fellowship with God. Halfway house godliness is wretched stuff: beware of it! Remember what we read of the mongrels who dwelt in Israel's land, who had been brought there by the Assyrian conqueror. They feared the Lord, and served other gods, and, therefore, Jehovah sent lions among them. Let all who are of that race remember the lions; for the Lord will not suffer such double-minded ones to live in peace before him.

Thus much, then, upon my first point: the divine call is too often only half obeyed.

II. Secondly, THIS CALL, ESPECIALLY AS IT COMES TO US, IS OF A VERY PECULIAR CHARACTER.

To us, of course, it is wholly *spiritual.* We are not called to-day to leave our country, and our kindred, so far as our residence is concerned; but it seems to me that we are called to a much more difficult position than that, namely, to stay on the old spot,

among old friends, and yet to lead a wholly new life. Of course, we are to quit all evil company; but we are not to leave the society of our fellow-men, nor to go out of the world. Even Abram was not called to be an ascetic, nor to live in a cave, nor to retire into the desert like a hermit. Within the borders of his own encampment Abram was a man among men, and pursued his daily calling as the keeper of great flocks of sheep, and herds of oxen, and camels, and so forth. Towards his neighbors he behaved himself with noble-minded independence and integrity. He was a pattern of what grace can make of a really noble man when he moves among those who are strangers to his God. But yet, beloved, Abram did, to a great extent, dwell in a favorable condition. He lived apart from the grosser sort; he was not wearied with the voices of a city, as Lot was: his own tents, and the many tents of his servants, made up quite a settlement, where God's name was reverenced and the fear of the Lord was felt. That canvas town had one over it of whom the Lord said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Some of us can almost seclude our families; but many others have a far harder task; they have to live in the city amid its sins, and yet not to be of it; they have in their earthly callings to come into daily contact with the ungodly, and yet they have to be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. As Abram was no Canaanite, though he sojourned in Canaan, so are we to prove ourselves to be of a totally distinct race. This is a very difficult piece of business. How great a wonder was asked by our Saviour's prayer—"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou

shouldest keep them from the evil"! Not by difference in brogue, nor by peculiarity in dress, are we to be marked out as the servants of God; but our lives must be so Christlike and pure, that men shall say of us, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy life betrayeth thee." This call, then, is of a deeply spiritual and peculiar character. My brother, have you heard it? My sister, have you heard it? Have you endeavored to obey it to the full? It means just this—that we are to flee all sin, without exception, and follow everything that is pure and holy, without exception. Others wallow in what they call the pleasures of sin: abhor such things, and protest against them. Shun, also, everything that is doubtful; for, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If you are not sure it is right, it is sin to you. Avoid the appearance of evil. Separate yourself from all that which Christ would have disapproved. Be so decided, also, as to leave everything that is hesitating. Be out-and-out for Jesus. While many will try to run both with the hare and the hounds, make it your object to abhor that which is evil and to cleave to that which is good. Make a point of wearing your regimentals. Be dead and buried to this present evil world with its frivolities, philosophies, and grandeurs. Regard the world as crucified to you, and be yourself crucified to it. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Go without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. In matters of religion follow the Lord fully, let the Word of God be your sole and sure rule, and nothing else. That religion which is not according to God's Word is a false religion. Accept neither doctrine nor ceremony for which there is no scriptural warrant. Search thou the Word about it all: "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light

in them." Follow thou thy conscience, as thy conscience is enlightened by the Spirit of God concerning his Word; follow the Word even in its jots and tittles. Make not too much of peculiarities in comparison with vital and fundamental truths; but, still, even with these less weighty matters, take heed that thou do not trifle, lest in neglecting the less thou learn to neglect the greater, and so become guilty of the great transgression. Avoid the world's religion; for if there is one world worse than another, it is the Christian world. No enemies of Israel were so bitter as their brethren the Edomites: brethren in name only become the fiercest of foes. Be thou distinctly removed from the religion which is based upon self-will, pride of intellect, and worldly conformity. The world's religion is as evil as the world's irreligion. Surrender to the plain teaching of the Spirit of God, and resolve in all things to follow thy Lord wherever he may lead thee. Stand thou alone, if others will not obey. In thine house let there be an altar for God, if there be not another in the land. Make thou a covenant with God through the one great Sacrifice, even if all others forget the Saviour.

See, dear friends, what the call is, and then remember that *it comes to the believer from God himself.* The Lord calls his servants unto the separated life, and because of his authority they are bound to obey. He calls by his Word, either preached or read: it comes to the individual by an application of the Spirit of God, so that the man yields cheerful assent thereto. He is drawn, and therefore he runs. Such a person feels it a pleasure to take Christ for his example, and to put his feet down in the very tracks of the Lord Jesus. It is ours to follow the Lord's precept and example with great care and sol-

emn determination, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. It was so with Abram: is it so with you?

Because this call comes from God, *it has for us a supreme authority.* We follow our Lord even when darkness is round about him: though we know not the way, we know the Lord, and therefore we follow him implicitly. To us the Word of God is more than the decrees of emperors, or the statutes of senators. If this thing were of men, if this thing were ordained by a learned council, or a reverend bench, it would be of small account in our eyes; but when he that made us and redeemed us speaks to us, we can only reply, "Help thy servants to do thy will, for thy will is our delight."

My brethren, if we thus separate ourselves unto obedience, *we must expect violent opposition.* Severe criticism will not be spared us. Of course, some will say, "The man is mad": others more gently will murmur, "He is sadly misled." Many will accuse you of a liking to be singular, or a weakness for going to extremes, or a self-righteous wish to excel others, or of having "a bee in your bonnet." Accusers will hint that you are seeking your own in some form or other; and if they cannot quite see a motive, they will imagine one. What is the use of imagination if it will not help a man out when his facts run short? Having once made up their mind that you are foolish and contemptible, they will view all your conduct through colored glasses, and condemn you up and down. Be not dismayed, but endure hardness for the love of Jesus.

To go forth and lead a separated life *will need faith*, and to have faith you will need the grace of God. Believe that God's command is right, and believe that he will justify you in fulfilling it. Believe that God's prom-

ise is true, and that he will prove it so. Abram was bidden to go, and he went. Look at Abram's case, and see how impossible it was for him to obey apart from faith in God. He was to go away from all that was dear, from all that was comfortable and settled; he was to go he knew not whither, and he was to go to obtain an inheritance for a son that was not born, and that was not likely ever to be born; for he was old, and Sarai was well stricken in years. Only faith could enable him to obey a call which looked so like a delusion. We need faith in every step of a holy life. Oh for more looking unto Jesus, more child-like dependence upon God! If thou believest, thou wilt do the Lord's will; but if thou dost not believe, thou wilt refuse to obey, and miss the blessing.

Suppose we do obey the divine call, what then? Will our course be smooth ever afterwards? Far from it. The walk of the separated believer *involves trial.* The trial of Abram in leaving his country was but one out of ten which are recorded. It is written, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." In the Lord's vineyard the knife is used if nowhere else. The Lord tried Abram, and he will try us; it is a part of the process of love by which he prepares us for the eternal rest. The course of true faith never does run smooth. If thou wilt obey the divine call thou shalt be favored with more trials, thou shalt be honored with still greater tests of thy fidelity; but then thou shalt be known as the friend of God, and God shall make thee to be a blessing to others, even to the end of time. Mark well what is proposed to you—that God shall take you, and give you his light, and his truth, and his salvation, that you may preserve it for all the ages, until Christ shall come. Are you willing to

accept so high an honor? Will you count the cost, and make your calling and election sure? Will you cry with Esaias, "Here am I! Send me"? As the Roman consul devoted himself to death in battle for the sake of the beloved city, will you devote yourself to God, and his cause and truth? In very deed such is my spirit. I wish there were ten thousand who would say the same. O my brother, blessed art thou among men, if thou art set apart for God and truth. Yea, my sister, blessed art thou among women, if thou art following the Lord fully in the way of his will.

III. This brings me to my third and last point. THIS CALL, WHEN IT IS OBEYED, PUTS US ON SPECIAL GROUND.

For, first, *God is bound to justify the course which he himself commands.* When Abram went to Canaan at the Lord's bidding and remained there, the responsibility was with the Lord. If any evil had come of his conduct he could not have blamed himself. It was neither his own wisdom nor his own folly which led him; God alone was his director. It is mine to obey, it is God's to prove that my obedience is wise. What peace this brings! O my hearer, if thou believest in Christ with all thy heart, and if thou becomest a sincere follower of Jesus in all things, God will justify thee in so doing, for thou doest it at his bidding. If there be any folly in holiness, the folly is not with thee, but with him that bade thee be holy. The servant is accountable for any action he does of his own head, but not for that which he does by the command of his principal. So you, in keeping close to God's will, are not accountable for consequences; the consequences must lie with God. As surely as wisdom is justified of her children, so is God justified of all believers; aye, and he justifieth believers,

and their faith is counted unto them for righteousness. Therefore, beloved, we stand on the ground of justification when we obey the call of God.

We cease, also, from that moment to be of the world. God deals with the world one way, but with his separated ones in another way. "Them that are without, God judgeth;" but those who are within are not under law, but under grace. It is the joy of faith that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. There is discipline now within the house of God; but it is not that of a court of justice, but of the abode of love. The Lord chastens his children, that they may not be condemned with the world. The separated ones are not numbered among the people of the earth. When you read of the seven trumpets, and vials, and plagues, fear not, for nothing shall by any means hurt you. When the blood shall flow in the day of vengeance up to the horses' bridles, then shall not a hair of your head perish, for the Lord secures those who are sealed to him. Babylon must fall, that lieth hard by Ur of the Chaldees, whence you came; and all that bear the mark of the beast shall die, even as Terah died in Haran; but as for you, "at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh." No evil shall touch you, for the Lord is your keeper. If you are walking in the separated path with God, and are setting him always before you, you shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. What a condition to be in! First justified, and then secured from the doom which will surely fall upon the guilty world.

Now, as free grace has separated you unto God, *you come into an honored fellowship with him.* Abram, in his tent, had God for his companion. He had near and clear

manifestations of God; he entertained angels unawares, and with those angels was the Son of God himself. If you quit the world to abide with God, God himself will abide with you. If you come out from the unclean world, the Lord has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them. I will be a father unto them, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." Oh, rest you in this sweet fact, that the Triune God will manifest himself to his chosen as he doth not to the world. You shall be one of the people near unto him.

By coming out from the world, and following the Lord closely, *we come under the divine care and protection.* How wonderfully Abram was screened from evil! Jehovah was his shield. He was a stranger in the midst of enemies, but they did not molest him: an awe was upon them, for Jehovah had said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." Wherever a true saint goes, the Lord lays his commands on all the powers of nature and all the angels of heaven to take care of him. When Abram was at peace God blessed him in all things; and if he went to war, God gave his enemies as driven stubble to his bow. If we are with God, God is with us. When God's will is our delight, God's providence is our inheritance. It is not so with you all: no, not even with all of you who profess to be Christians; but it is so with those of you who keep close to God's Word, and follow in will, in spirit, in belief, and in act, the example of his dear Son. O beloved, let us strive after this! Let us aim at perfect conformity to the will of God, for this will place us in quiet nearness to God.

Henceforth *Abram was for God's use only.* God

treated him as his confidant, as the receiver of heavenly revelations, and as the founder of a race. God will also use us, if we will come where he can use us. Vessels set apart for the Master's use must not be used by the servants. God is a great King; and when he selects a cup for his own table, he will not have it used by others. If other lips drink out of the chalice of thy life, the Lord disdains thee. Thou must be for him only, or thou art not his spouse. If thou be his from the crown of thy head to the sole of thy foot by solemn consecration, he will honor thee yet more and more; yea, thou knowest not to what high ends he has ordained thee, both in this life and in the ages to come. But look thou well to this, that thou be holiness unto the Lord.

One more thought presses itself upon my heart: the man who for Christ's sake has cut all his moorings, and separated himself from the world, to follow the Lamb, has learned how to live, but he has also learned how to die. We die unto the world, and thereby learn to die. When we cease to trust in riches, when we resign our comforts, when we no longer lean on friends, when all things visible become as shadows to us, then we make a rehearsal of death. Unless the Lord himself shall soon descend from heaven with a shout, we shall all die. Yes, the hour of our departure hastens on. Then we shall have to cut ourselves loose from our moorings, be they what they may. Soon shall we hear this word from heaven, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." This will be our summons to the better Canaan, the land that floweth with milk and honey. We shall depart out of this world to face an unknown eternity; but we shall by no means dread the migration. He

that has crossed the great river, the river Euphrates, will not fear the Jordan. To give up the world will be no new thing for you or for me: we have given it up many times already. We have frequently given up everything into the Lord's hands in real earnest, and we can readily do it once more. We live here as strangers and sojourners, and we find little to charm us in this foreign land. Our treasure is above, and it will be a joy for our souls to rise to the place where our hearts already dwell. We cannot be sorry to quit a dead world. Who loves to sit in a charnel-house? If we tremble to leave kindred and friends, yet let us remember that we have already quitted them in spirit. Let us journey, as Abram did, towards the south; that is to say, let us get still further away from the old abode. Let us make for the heart of Immanuel's land. Let us press towards the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, and rest not till we stand in our lot and behold him whom Abram saw with gladness.

The one question I finish with is:—Do you know anything about this? Have you ever felt this divine call? If so, make your calling and election sure. Carry out the separating ordinance to the full. Some of us had to take very decided steps at our first starting, but we began aright. We have been called since to equally painful courses, but we hope to keep right. Anything is better than a wound in the conscience. If we keep close to Christ, we shall find rest unto our souls. We look back without regret to what we may have suffered by decision; counting it less than nothing for the joy that was set before us. We wish that all our converts would be out-and-out in their course of life. O you who by grace are beginners in the heavenly life, make a strong

resolve—"We will be the servants of God, and endeavor in all things to obey him." Since God made you, and by the blood of his dear Son redeemed you, it is yours to be doubly the Lord's. There are the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ; are these yours? Make sure on that point; and if they are yours, yield yourself to Jesus, and, from this day forward, do his bidding without question or delay. Quit everything contrary to the Lord's mind and will; at all cost be true; then shall the Lord be your delight, and his service shall be your heaven below. If you are now separated unto him, you shall find your reward in that day when he shall divide the sheep from the goats, for then you shall be placed at his right hand, to hear him say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." May you be the children of believing Abram, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

IV.

NATHANAEL; OR, THE READY BELIEVER AND HIS REWARD.

April 29, 1888.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these."—JOHN i. 50.

NATHANAEL was by nature a man free from cunning and deceit. He was a specimen of that "honest and good ground" of which our Saviour speaks in the parable, upon which, when the seed fell, a hundredfold harvest was produced. We have some such men about us, thank God, in this country: regular John Blunts, as we say, clear as crystal, true as the sun in the heavens. Many men are well known to us, who are upright, downright, truthful, honest, candid, and open-hearted. You might trust them anywhere; yea, trust them to repeat a conversation without misrepresenting it, and that is saying a good deal in these times. Such people do not understand the clever arts of craft and cunning, for they do not take to them naturally, and have never been trained in the practice of policy. Speech is not to them the medium for concealing their thoughts. When they have a mind to speak, they speak their mind. You know where they are. They may have a great many faults, but they have not the faults of deception and dissimulation. They are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile. You know the kind of people: they may at times speak

too harshly, and hurt your feelings; they may put things in an ugly shape, and tread on people's corns; but they are as straight as a plumb-line, and you may be sure that you know them when you have heard what they say. In the end they cause far less pain to people's feelings than those who have a great deal of finesse and policy, whose words are softer than butter, but inwardly they are drawn swords. Smooth and oily tongues, with lying hearts at the back of them, are fit instruments for Satan; but truth-speaking lips, which are joined to an honest heart, are precious things which the Lord himself delights to use.

Now, when the good brethren who had joined the Saviour came to tell Nathanael that they had found the Christ, he blurted out his objection at once. They said, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth;" but he did not take everything for gospel which his friends told him. Nathanael had been born and bred in the midst of people prejudiced against Nazareth, and he had sucked in their prejudice, and felt sure that the Messiah could no more come from Nazareth than a profound philosopher could come from Gotham. He does not beat about the bush, but he says at once, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It is always a good thing, when a man has a prejudice, if he will but state it, and "out" with it. You can always deal with this kind of fellow. If he will say what is troubling him, and tell you what keeps him back from faith, why, then you can put your finger on his difficulty, and try to remove it. It is a great miracle when a dumb devil is cast out; if the evil will but speak, and so declare itself, we have a chance of overcoming it.

Nathanael's question was met at once by his comrades, who said to him, "Come and see;" and, like the honest man that he was, he took up their challenge. He would "come and see." How many there are who make objections, but they will not "come and see!" They have heard concerning a certain preacher, perhaps, such and such absurd things; but another says, "It is not so. Come and see." Not they. They do not want to come and see: for they are unfair, and prefer to cherish a bad opinion of the man. They have heard that Calvinistic doctrine is cruel, harsh, and unjust. "Ah!" says a believer in free grace, "you have only seen a caricature of it. You should read for yourself, and judge by Scripture." Oh, no: they do not want to read! They have made up their minds: not that they have much of a mind to make up; if they had more mind, it might take them longer to make it up. But, having once made up their little mind, they have no mind to unmake it; but they prefer to go blindly on, whether they are right or wrong. They know so much that they do not wish to learn any more. Nathanael was not of that sort. "Come and see," was an invitation which commended itself to his judgment. "Oh, yes," said he, "by all means! I am open to conviction. I will come and see." I wish I could prevail on each one of my hearers to search the Bible for himself to see what the true doctrine is, that he may have a firm foundation to build upon, and not take his religion at second-hand from another.

Nathanael is on his way to see for himself, when the Lord Jesus Christ, turning to those round about him, says, in a voice loud enough for him to hear, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Here comes a man with no craft, no cunning in him. Nathanael is

startled to find his real character so clearly read, and somewhat bluntly asks, "Whence knowest thou me?" I must do him the justice of believing that he said it respectfully, yet, nevertheless, he curtly said, "Whence knowest thou me?" As much as to say—"Thou hast hit the nail on the head: but how camest thou to know this?" You see, the inquiry that was in his mind is soon upon his tongue; his words at once declare his thought. It is a great mercy when men dare speak upon that which troubles them. Instead of letting a doubt or a difficulty fester in their souls, they bring it out, that the light may play upon it, and it is soon gone.

"Jesus answered, and said to him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." What Nathanael was doing under the fig tree I do not know. Some think that he was there in meditation; others say in prayer. Very possible, but I do not know, and the wisest expositors do not know, and you do not know. Nobody knew but Jesus and Nathanael. He was doing something of which he was not ashamed, but which he modestly did not wish to have known, and so he had chosen a private place. That transaction was a secret between himself and the Lord his God, and he who knew that secret must have come from God. Perhaps he was doing nothing there, but sitting still before the Lord in anguish of spirit. Possibly he there had looked towards the God of his fathers with hope, or had enjoyed hallowed fellowship with heaven. Anyhow, Jesus mentioned to him a something which he remembered, and thought much of, though it was entirely between God and his own soul. Between Jesus and Nathanael, "under the fig tree" served as a pass-word. They were known to one another

by that; and at once Nathanael cried, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." He is fairly won, and by an open confession he commits himself at once to what he believes. He is not ashamed of his convictions. He has enlisted beneath the banner of the King of Israel once for all. Forth he comes without a moment's reservation, with that blessed confession of faith—"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Our Lord Jesus, charmed with the grace which he had himself given, delighted with the faith which he had himself created, answers, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these." This ready convert, so speedily convinced, was very acceptable to the Lord Jesus.

Now, we have to-night here, first, *one who believed readily.* I am going to speak of that. Secondly, here is *one who was highly commended for it:* "Thou shalt see greater things than these." Thirdly, here is *one who might possibly in after days be subject to a peculiar temptation on account of his very readiness to believe.* And, lastly, here is *one who, I doubt not, was peculiarly grateful;* and if there is another here like him, he ought to be very grateful too.

I. First, then, HERE IS ONE WHO BELIEVED READILY. The first time he saw the Saviour he was converted to the faith. The first sentences that were addressed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ fairly won him to hearty faith and loyal service. Why was that? Why was he so soon brought to discipleship?

I think, perhaps, it was because *he was such a true man himself that the element of suspicion was not in his character.* Persons who are remarkably suspicious and

constantly incredulous, are seldom very truthful themselves. If you follow them home, you will discover that they are suspicious of others because they are not true themselves, and their difficulty in believing others arises from the fact that they measure other people's corn with their own bushel. They imagine that other people are as big liars as they are themselves. I believe that this is the bottom of much of the mistrust and questioning which seethes around us. Sometimes that suspiciousness comes upon men's minds through long dealing with deceptive persons. But if you find that a man began life with a general suspicion and doubt of others, you may conclude that he was a born deceiver, radically false from his birth. He judges human nature from his experiences within his own heart. He has observed his own trickiness, and he thinks that everybody else is going to trick him; and so he is full of suspicion. Nathanael had never taken anybody in, nor tried to mislead any one in his life, and therefore he did not expect to be deceived. I wonder whether he was a sailor. I should think that he must have been, for sailors are generally as open as the sea they sail over. He never said anything with reserve. Not he. He was accustomed to wear his heart on his sleeve, even if daws did peck at it. He could not conceal anything, nor think that others did so. He was just as honest as the day; and so he came to the Saviour, with a heart that was open to faith, ready to believe him. I should think the very sight of the Saviour's blessed face had half won him, and the tone of that truthful voice had moved him; but when it came to his laying bare a secret in his life, which he was sure that nobody knew but himself and God, then Nathanael yielded to conviction at once, and became a believer straightway.

Now, I do hope that there are some here whom the Lord has given, from their very birth, a truthful, open-hearted nature: now if you should believe in Jesus Christ to-night straightway, even though it be the first time you have ever heard of him, I shall bless the grace of God which has led you to so speedy a closing in with Christ. Oh that the Holy Ghost may complete the work of which there is already so hopeful a beginning!

But, further, this Nathanael, this rapid believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, had, I have no doubt, *been seeking guidance beforehand, and that guidance he had honestly followed.* I should think that he had for years been expecting the coming of the Messiah. The tone of his language argues that. Therefore, when Philip came to him, and told him that he had found the Messiah, and indicated to him that he had better come and see for himself, he was willing at once to come, and without delay he came, with the view of seeing for himself whether this Jesus of Nazareth was the promised one. He was not only candid, but he was interested. He was concerned about divine things, and in thorough earnest to know the truth in reference to them. So that he came to Jesus with solemn intent and eager desire. O dear friends, if you came to hear the gospel, meaning business, we should expect to see more of you converted. But people come into our great assemblies to see the congregation, or to inspect the building, or to hear the preacher; their motive is mere idle curiosity. Well, if they get a blessing, we shall heartily thank God for it, and admire the sovereignty of his grace; but when persons come, as they often do, I thank God, even from a great distance, with the desire to know what the gospel is, and with a wish to find the Saviour for themselves, then we

have surer hope. These inquirers are the people that are likely to be converted. When fish want to be caught, it is good fishing. When they are anxious to take the bait, then the fisherman has fine times. If, my dear hearers, you would come here saying, "I will go and see whether I can find salvation; I will hear with the intention that the hearing may be a means of grace to my soul," none of you would come long in vain where Christ Jesus is faithfully preached. If you come with a desire of understanding and knowing him, he will come and reveal himself to you. This was one main reason why Nathanael so speedily believed—that he came meaning business, having sought guidance, and desiring really to find the Messiah of whom Philip had spoken.

Observe that *he was satisfied with one piece of clear evidence.* That one item of evidence convinced him. The Lord Jesus said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nobody knew that he had been under the fig tree except the Lord, who sees all things. No mortal living was aware of what Nathanael had done, or thought, or purposed in that shady retreat. When Jesus, therefore, with a peculiar look, said "I saw thee," Nathanael also saw him that spake to him. "Godhead alone could speak thus," said he: "there is the Spirit of God in that man. He knows the secret things of my life. He has revealed me to myself." "Rabbi," said he, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." The conclusion was a sound one, but how speedily it was reached!

One argument, if it is sound, is enough. If a matter is in dispute, and if one man can solemnly declare that he saw such and such a thing, and that one man is of high repute, his evidence is sufficient for a truthful man

to rest upon. Twenty may come and say that they think it is so-and-so, but twenty weak links will not make a strong chain; and I would rather trust to one solid link than I would trust to a chain of twenty worn and rusted links, each one of which is ready to snap. If it is so, it is so. If it is not so, it is not so. If a man has proved anything to me by one infallible proof, that is enough. Hence, I believe that those who come to Christ on one bit of evidence are justified in so doing. They afterwards receive a host of confirming evidences, but one is quite enough for them to begin with. Oh, that I might have some to-night who shall hear in this sermon some one thing which shall strike them as being of the Lord! I pray that some secret matter, which I do not personally know, shall yet be uttered by me, so that my hearers will say to themselves, "How came that to be spoken? That fits me exactly, yet the minister could not have known it. God must have spoken to me. Only the Lord knew what I did in the back kitchen. Only he knew what I was thinking of this afternoon; but, speaking through his servant, he has touched a secret spring and opened a drawer in my cabinet that nobody knew of save myself! This is the finger of God." God grant that some may thus be led to Jesus Christ by one piece of evidence, and may not tarry to feel fifty impressions on their hearts. Oh, that you would not wait for whole weeks of invitations, and months of pressure, and years of expostulation; but oh, that you would yield to-night! Sometimes, in warfare, cities have been taken without a shot being fired. The valiant men have come up to the gates, and they have said, "Capitulate, and you shall be spared;" and the townsmen have opened wide their gates. I know that many other cities have had to be battered till there

has been scarcely a house without tokens of shot and shell; but what has been their gain when they have been captured after all? Do not let it be so with your souls, but yield at once to the conquering Saviour, who comes forth in the robes of his glorious grace, and bids you yield; and promises that, if you accept his sceptre, you shall see the greatness of his grace.

Notice, however, that although Nathanael yielded at once and believed on one bit of evidence, *yet his faith went a long way!* He did not merely say, "Rabbi, I believe that thou art the Messiah," but he said, "Thou art the Son of God." This was farther than anybody else had gone at that time, so far as I remember. He added, "Thou art the King of Israel;" and this again was a great declaration to make. He worshipped Jesus, and he crowned him. He owned him as God, and he magnified him as King. Do not suppose that the faith which is quickly born is therefore weakly. Nay, but that faith which comes suddenly and quickly is often the very best and strongest faith in all the world; and I trust that some of you may prove it to be so to-night by flying to Christ at once, as the doves fly to their windows, and resting in him till you find fulness of peace.

Thus much concerning the Israelite indeed who believed readily.

II. In the second place, HERE IS ONE WHO WAS HIGHLY COMMENDED.

The Lord Jesus owned his faith to be true faith. He said, "Believest thou?" but he meant that he perceived that he truly believed. He owned that, though his faith was born then and there, it was the genuine article. Christ owns, as true faith, that faith which is not long in coming. Fear not, dear hearer, that if thou believest

off-hand at this very moment thy faith will be any the less sincere and effectual.

Jesus did more than own it to be faith. *He commended it as rarely excellent.* He spoke as if he were astonished. "Because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?"—as much as to say, "Many see me work miracles, and do not believe; dost thou believe so soon? They see me heal lepers, and raise the dead, and yet they will not believe; but thou believest merely because I said, I saw thee under the fig tree." He is charmed with him for his readiness to own the truth. Why, there are some young people who come to Christ and believe in him by some one little word from their mother; and, on the other hand, there are men and women who have been for fifty years hearers of the gospel, and yet have not believed. Now, the Christ has an admiration of those who readily, willingly, obediently, and cheerfully come, making no questions, raising no difficulties, but on comparatively slender evidence, that evidence being quite sufficient, yield their full trust to Jesus Christ their Lord.

And our blessed Lord was so pleased with this ready faith, that *he made a promise to Nathanael.* Said he, "Thou shalt see greater things than these. If thou canst see so much in my one saying, that I saw thee under the fig tree, thou hast the kind of eyes that are fit to see great sights." He that will see shall see, but he that closes his eyes shall be blinded. Many are the people in this world who, if you show them the greatest marvel, do not wonder. They look at it, and see nothing. When you meet with such an unobservant person, you say to yourself, "I shall not show that man anything more. It does not pay to unveil rarities to him, he has no appreciation of them." But here is another who, when you show him

some curio that you have in your house, is pleased with it, and spies out at once the excellence and beauty of it. You say, "I have something more which I will gladly show you!" When your visitor appreciates your choice treasure, you say to him, "I will unlock all my cabinets. I will take you into my private room, and every little thing I have that can interest you, you shall see, because I perceive that you have eyes, and a mind which finds gratification in rare curiosities." Oh, you that readily believe in Christ, you are the men to whom Christ will make known his secrets! Those of you who are "fools, and slow of heart to believe" must mend your manners, or the Holy Spirit will never lead you into the mysteries of the kingdom. Did not Jesus say to one who came to him by night, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" But, you Israelites indeed, you quick believers, to you will he reveal himself as the ladder that father Jacob saw, reaching from earth to heaven, upon which the angels ascend and descend between God and his chosen. You shall see the deep things of God. You are the people out of whom he will make such men as John, who, in Patmos, beheld a glorious Apocalypse. O my beloved hearers, may it be so with you! Because your faith so readily chimes in with what Christ reveals, may you have visions of God, and may none of you be so dull of heart that it shall be said, "He could not show them many mighty works because of their unbelief!"

III. I have thus spoken, and I come, thirdly, to notice that HERE IS A MAN WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY BE TROUBLED WITH A PECULIAR TEMPTATION. People of this kind are subject to a special trial, with which I will now deal.

In this church a considerable number of us, beginning

with the pastor, came to Christ after an awful amount of conviction and despondency. We are none the better for this, but we are at least free from one particular temptation of the evil one. Oh, how I look back upon those times in which I felt my bondage, but could not attain to liberty—those days in which Christ was preached to me, but I could not hear him, and I wandered up and down everywhere before I found peace! In this church, and in the officers of the church among the deacons, there is especially one dear brother who sometimes can hardly understand me when I speak about the difficulties some have in coming to Christ, for he never experienced them. You all know him, one of the sweetest and best of men; but he came to Jesus Christ as a boy readily enough. He heard the gospel, and he believed it, and without any sort of terror he rejoiced in the Lord, and he continues to do so to this day. He is none the worse saint for this, but in some respects all the better. I know, however, what is the peculiar temptation of those who come so readily to Christ. The devil comes to them, and he says, "Now, look you. You have read Mr. Bunyan's 'Grace Abounding,' have you not?" "Yes," says the good man. "Well," says he, "you never went through the like battle and struggle." "No, I never did." "Then," says he, "You are no child of God. You see, you were easily converted: there was no deep work in your soul. You came to Jesus Christ one sunshiny day, and you will go away from him one dark day. You are like the stony-ground hearer, the seed sprang up in you on a sudden, because there was no depth of earth, and you will soon die away when the sun is risen with fervent heat." Now, the next time the devil comes to any of you with that, I want you to talk to him, if he is worth it, for your

own good. I want you to quench the fiery dart which he will fling at you. It is true that many come to the Lord Jesus under extreme difficulties, and are long before they can rest in faith; but you must not compare yourself with others, nor expect that the work of God will take precisely the same shape in every heart. Some, like Nicodemus, say, "How can these things be?" but others believe in Jesus as readily as Nathanael did, and they come just as truly, just as really, just as lastingly as those who find it difficult to come.

Let me help you with a few considerations. Those you have read of, who came to Christ under so much terror, *it may be that they had some other trouble at the same time*, as well as the trouble of their conscience. Perhaps, in addition to being convinced of sin, they were suffering from poverty, or sickness, or dyspepsia, or remorse, or some other vexation of spirit. Discern carefully between spiritual trouble and temporal trouble. Temporal trouble may help to aggravate the spiritual, but it is not a necessary part of it, but very much the reverse. It may increase the apparent depth of the work of repentance, but it may detract from its real worth.

In the next place, it may be, and probably is the fact, that those who found so much difficulty in coming to Christ *were worried by Satan*. Perhaps he injected into their minds blasphemous thoughts, or he suggested doubts concerning the Scriptures, or the truth of God. Because they were just escaping from his power he worried them most maliciously. Do you want to be worried in that way? Do you think that there is any advantage in Satan's attacks? If you can get to Christ without them, ought you not to be thankful to escape them? How can you desire an affliction so utterly undesirable? How

can you wish to feel that which those who suffer from it would give their eyes to be rid of? I beseech you, do be reasonable.

In many persons their difficulties in coming to Christ were *caused very largely by their melancholy temperament.* We are not all alike cheerful by natural constitution. Why, here is one man who is bright-eyed by nature, and when he is down he is higher up than others are when they are up. He is always bright and hopeful. Yonder is another brother who seems inevitably to take a dark view of matters. He is an unhappily constituted person; a person with whom it is not easy to live, except in a very large hotel, in which the dinner-table is many yards long. You know and avoid the style of man. If there is a melancholy disposition, it tends to darken the work of the Spirit in the heart, and whereas the work of the Spirit makes the man sorrowful, his own melancholy disposition, perhaps caused by mental disease, darkens that sorrow into black despair. Few of us are perfectly sane. In fact, I do not think anybody is altogether so. I see you smile, but I am not jesting: we have each one a peculiarity which we could hardly defend by the rules of strict reasoning. Have we not? We are all a little "touched" by that black hand which sin stretched out when it shook our universal manhood in all its faculties. Some are touched with melancholy from their birth, and so a part of their great terror when under conviction may arise from the fact that they are not absolutely free to form a hopeful judgment. Why should you wish to be like them? What can there be desirable about feelings which spring from a disease?

Again, there is no doubt that many in coming to Christ are *greatly troubled because they are ignorant.* They do

not know that which would comfort them if they did but know it. They are vexed with fears which would not exist if they were better acquainted with Scripture. If they knew more of the doctrines of grace they would not be vexed with the fears which their ignorance creates. You who are taught in the Word are all the more likely to find speedy peace. Now, dear friends, do you want to be bothered with fears which only spring out of ignorance? Must it not be much better for you, having a clearer light and a brighter knowledge, to say, "Yes, that is it. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I am saved. Blessed be his name! I ask no questions. I believe, and am saved at once?"

May it not also be that those who are so hard put to it in coming to Christ *are without the helps that you have?* Perhaps they cannot read. Possibly they have nobody to explain the Scriptures to them. They may be misled by their religious guides, and have no one to keep them out of the ditch. It may be that they are placed where they are rather hindered than helped; they have no Sunday-school teacher, no Christian friend to sympathize with them; and so they have a hard fight of it. Many a man who is wounded in battle is soon restored, because the surgeon takes him up as soon as the bullet lays him low; whereas the wound of another, who has to lie and bleed for hours, will prove far more serious. Do you not think that you ought to be very thankful that you have so many things to help you, and that thus you the more readily come to Christ?

Very possibly, too, many of those who had those terrors and horrors in coming to Christ, as I had myself, *must lay them to the door of their unbelief* Had they believed, they might have had comfort long before; but they went

to the law for comfort, or they looked to feelings instead of looking to Christ, and so they remained in darkness. Now, if you have the privilege of believing at once, as I pray you may have, should you not be glad of it, and, instead of envying those others, should you not thank God that you were brought to find Jesus Christ by so sunny and speedy a route?

There is a story that I have told you before, but I must tell it to you again, for I do not know anything better. A young man in Edinburgh went out, and he thought he would speak about Jesus to the first person that he met with. He met a Musselburgh fishwife carrying a great load on her back. I cannot speak Scotch: I have not that useful acquirement; so I will put the conversation into English. He said to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Ay," said she. "Well," he said, "did you ever feel a spiritual burden?" "Ay," said she, "that I did, long ago, long ago, and I soon got rid of it; for I did not go the same way to work that John Bunyan's pilgrim did." "Oh," thought the young man, "I hoped that I had met with a Christian woman, but she must be a great heretic to talk in that way." "Now," said she, "Bunyan's Evangelist that he speaks of was not half a gospel preacher. He was one of the usual sort. He was not clear in the gospel; for when he met with the poor pilgrim, weary with his burden, he said to him, 'Do you see that wicket-gate?' 'No,' said the man, 'I do not see it.' 'Do you see that light over the gate?' 'Well,' he said, 'I think I do.' 'Now,' he said, 'you run that way with your burden.' Why man," said she, "that was not the way to do at all. What had that man to do with the wicket-gate or with the light over it? The gospel does not say run to a gate or a

light. What he should have said was, 'Do you see that cross? Look at that, and your burden will fall from your shoulder.' I looked straight away to the cross, and not to the wicket-gate; and at the cross I lost my burden. Now," said she, "what did pilgrim get by going round to the wicket-gate? He tumbled into the Slough of Despond, and was like to have lost his life there." "Ah!" said the young man, "did you never go through the Slough of Despond?" "Ah, yes!" she said, "I have been through that slough many a time; but, let me tell you, it is much better to go through it with your burden off than it is with your burden on." And so it is I do not want any of you to attempt to flounder through the Slough of Despond with your burden on I want you to have done with the Slough of Despond, and the wicket-gate, and all that bother, and just look to Christ alone, for salvation lies in a look at him, and there is salvation in none other Peace comes to sinners by nothing else but faith in Jesus. All else is vain, be it what it may Frames and feelings, sinkings and risings, doings and frettings—all these may go for nothing Believe in Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. This is God's short way to heaven, and blessed is he who knows how to take it"

Listen yet once more. Thou sayest, "But I have heard of some who endured a dreadful law work within their souls. They were ploughed and cut up dreadfully, and I never was." I will further tell thee that certain persons need rougher handling than others. The needle in surgery will do for certain cases, whereas the lancet is wanted for others. If the Lord can with a needle do for thee all that is needed, why dost thou ask more? The Lord required to take the knife to me, and art thou going to fret because thou hast never felt the deep gashes

which made me cry out in agony? I pray thee, be not such a fool: I cannot speak a softer word if thou hast a craving after anguish.

Again, the Lord may deal roughly with some because *he means to qualify them for comforting despairing souls.* He puts his servants through the furnace when he means them to work at pulling others out of the fire. He chastens them every morning because he means to make Barnabases of them, that they may be sons of consolation to souls in distress. I have been through the thick darkness at times for your sakes. If ever a soul was in a horror of great darkness, I was one day when I preached in this pulpit from "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I could not understand why I felt in such an awful state as I did, till that evening there came into the vestry a man whose hair seemed to stand on end. He looked at me, and said, "I have never found a preacher that met my experience before." We sat down and he told out his tale of woe. I rescued that man, by seasonable comfort, from being sent to a lunatic asylum, and perhaps from committing suicide; and then I said to the Lord my God, "Let me go through the fire again, if it will help me to meet the case of thy poor afflicted children. Let me feel the horror of great darkness, if so I may thereby find light with which to cheer the victims of despair." But you, my dear brother, my dear sister, may not be called thus to cut your way through the forests of sorrow as the pioneer of others. You are not sent to be a guide to thousands, but quietly to pursue your own lowly way; and why do you want all this painful experience? You cannot make use of it; be thankful that you are spared the ordeal. Those who have to be champions must be trained for war after a sterner sort

than those who only make up the rank and file of the army. If thy Lord means to lead thee only as sheep at his heel into the green pastures, by the still waters, thou wilt see but little of the war, and little of the rough side of the march; and why shouldst thou be so stupid as to desire distress, and condemn thyself because thou hast it not? Be a Nathanael. Take the happier and better side, and believe thou thy God without a doubt or a quibble; and go thou to heaven following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, without doubt or fear.

I was going to have another head, but I think that I will not. I will venture no further, but close with a word to sinners, although I have in truth been speaking to them all through my discourse.

Hear me, thou that wouldst be saved. The way of salvation is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, by trusting him. There are two things I have to say to thee. First, God commands thee to believe in Jesus Christ: and, secondly, nothing thou canst do will please God so much as for thee at once to believe in his only-begotten Son, whom he has set forth to be the propitiation for sin.

These are two strong things to say, and so I will not say them, of myself, but give you God's Word for them. Please note these texts down, all of you. First Epistle General of John, third chapter, twenty-third verse:—"And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Let me tell you where it is again. First Epistle of John, third chapter, twenty-third verse:—"This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." If thou art commanded to do it, do it. If thou hast salvation promised thee when thou dost believe on the name

of Jesus, why then believe, and have salvation. Believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. That is the first point. God commands thee: wilt thou disobey?

The second thing I said was that nothing thou canst do will please God so much as for thee now to believe in Jesus Christ. Look at the sixth chapter of John's gospel, and the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses. There you have it. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" They meant, "What are the best works, the works most pleasing to God?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." If you could build a row of alms-houses, or endow a church, or pay the salaries of a hundred missionaries, it would not half so well please God as for you to believe on his Son Jesus Christ. Trust Christ, and thou hast worshipped God as acceptably as cherubim and seraphim. Trust Christ, and thou hast brought unto the Lord that which will charm him more than the hallelujahs which, day without night, circle his throne with praise. Thou poor guilty man, thou poor guilty woman, humble, unknown, obscure, a nobody, God bids thee trust his Son, and assures thee that this will please him more than all else thou canst do! Wilt thou not do it? Oh, end your ramblings; end your strivings; end your seekings. Come and trust my Lord Jesus, and thou shalt receive eternal life. Your frettings, and your hopings, and your doubtings, your comings, and your goings—end them all by simply trusting Jesus, and it is finished: thou art saved from wrath, and the life of holiness has begun in thee. Now shalt thou live after a nobler sort. Now shalt thou be filled with good works to the praise of his glory, seeing thou art no more trusting

in them. I beseech thee trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and thou shalt receive power to become a child of God.

May the Lord bless you, dear friends! May we all meet in heaven, the whole company of us, without exception, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

V.

CURED AT LAST.

April 8, 1888.

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched."—LUKE viii. 43, 44.

THOUGH I take Luke's statement as a text, I shall constantly refer to the version of the same story which we find in Mark v. 25 to 29.

Here we have one of the Lord's hidden ones: a case not to be publicly described because of its secret sorrow. We have here a woman of few words and much shamefacedness. Her malady subjected her to grievous penalties according to the ceremonial law. There is a terrible chapter in the Book of Leviticus concerning such a case as hers. She was unclean; everything that she sat upon, and all who touched it, shared in the defilement. So that, in addition to her continual weakness, she was made to feel herself an outcast, under the ban of the law. This created, no doubt, great loneliness of spirit, and made her wish to hide herself out of sight. In the narrative before us she said not a word until the Saviour drew it out of her, for her own lasting good. She acted very practically and promptly, but she was a silent seeker: she would have preferred to have remained in obscurity, if so it could have been. Some here may belong to the great company of the timid and trembling ones. If courage before

others is needed to secure salvation, matters will go hard with them, for they shrink from notice, and are ready to die of shame because of their secret grief. Cowper's hymn describes their inward feelings, when it says of the woman—

> "Concealed amid the gathering throng,
> She would have shunn'd thy view,
> And if her faith was firm and strong,
> Had strong misgivings too."

Such plants grow in the shade, and shrink from the light of the sun. The nature of their sorrow forces them into solitary self-communion. Oh, that the Lord may heal such at this hour!

The immediate cure of this woman is the more remarkable because it was a wayside miracle. The Saviour was on the road to restore the daughter of Jairus; this woman's healing was an extra of grace, a sort of oversplash of the great fountain of mercy. The cup of our Lord's power was full—full to the brim—and he was bearing it to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; this poor creature did but receive a drop which he spilt on the way. *We* do well if, when going upon some errand of love, we concentrate all our energy upon it, and do it well in the end: but the Saviour could not only perform one great marvel, but he could work another as a sort of by-play incidentally—I had almost said, accidentally, on the road. The episodes of the Lord Jesus are as beautiful as the main run of his life's poem. Oh, that this day, while my sermon may seem meant for one, and distinctly directed to his salvation, it may also, by the power of Jesus, save another not so clearly pointed at! While the word is aimed at one particular charac-

ter, may the Lord cause the very wind of the gospel shot to overcome another: or to change the figure for a better one, while we spread the table for some bidden guest, may another hungry soul have grace given him to take his place at the banquet of grace! May those who hide away, and whom, therefore, we are not likely to discover, come forth to Jesus, and touch him, and live!

Let us at once speak of this much-afflicted woman, for she is a typical character. While we describe her conduct and *her* cure, I trust she may serve as a looking-glass in which many tremblers may see themselves. We shall carefully note *what she had done*, and then *what came of it.* This will lead us on to see *what she did at last*, and *what we also should do.* May the Holy Spirit make this a very practical discourse by causing you to follow her till you gain the blessing as she did! The preacher is very weak; and may the Lord, for this very reason, work by him to your salvation.

Consider, therefore, concerning this woman, WHAT SHE HAD DONE. She had been literally dying for twelve years. What had she been doing? Had she resigned herself to her fate, or treated her malady as a small matter? Far from it. Her conduct is highly instructive.

First, *she had resolved not to die if a cure could be had.* She was evidently a woman of great determination and hopefulness. She knew that this disease of hers would cause her life to ebb away, and bring her to the grave; but she said within herself, "I will have a struggle for it. If there is a possibility of removing this plague it shall be removed, let it cost me what it may of pain or payment." Oh, what a blessing it would be if unsaved ones here would say each one for himself, "I am a lost

soul; but if a lost soul can be saved, I will be saved. I am guilty; but if guilt can be washed away, mine shall be washed away. I have a hard heart and I know it; but if a heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, I long to have it so, and I will never rest until this gracious work is wrought in me!" Alas, it is not so with many! Indifference is the rule; indifference about their immortal souls! Many are sick with dire spiritual disease, but they make no resolve to have it cured; they trifle with sin, and death, and heaven and hell.

Insensibility has seized upon many, and a proud conceit: they are full of sin, and yet they talk of self-righteousness. They are weak, and can do nothing; yet they boast of their ability. They are not conscious of their true condition, and hence they have no mind to seek a cure. How should they desire healing when they do not believe that they are diseased? How sad that beneath the ruddy cheek of morality there should lurk the fatal consumption of enmity to God! How horrible to be fair without and leprous within! Are there not many who can talk freely about religion, and seem as if they were right with God, and yet in the secret of their hearts they are the victims of an insincerity, and a want of truth, which fatally undermine the life of their profession. They are not what they seem to be: a secret sin drains away the life-blood of their religion. May the Holy Spirit show every unregenerate person the fatal nature of his soul's disease; for this, I trust, would lead to the making of a firm resolve to find salvation, if salvation is to be had.

No doubt some are held back from such action by the freezing power of despair. They have reached the conclusion that there is no hope for them. The promises of

the gospel they regard as the voice of God to others, but as having no cheering word for them. One might suppose that they had searched the book of life, and had made sure that their names were not written there; they act as if their death-warrant had been signed. They cannot believe in the possibility of their becoming partakers of everlasting life. They are under a destroying delusion, which leads them to abandon hope. None are more presumptuous than the despairing. When men have no hope, they soon have no fear. Is not this a dreadful thing? May the Lord save you from such a condition! Despair of God's mercy is an unreasonable thing; if you think you have grounds for it, the lying spirit must have suggested them to you. Holy Scripture contains no justification for hopelessness. No mortal hath a just pretence to perish in despair. Neither the nature of God, nor the gospel of God, nor the Christ of God, warrant despair. Multitudes of texts encourage hope; but no one Scripture, rightly understood, permits a doubt of the mercy of God. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Jesus, the great Healer, is never baffled by any disease of human nature: he can cast out a legion of devils, and raise the dead. Oh that I could whisper hope into the dull ear of yonder mourner! Oh that I could drop a rousing thought into the sullen heart of the self-condemned! How glad should I be! My poor desponding friend, I would fain see thy chains snapped, thy fetters broken off! Oh that the Spirit of God would cause thee, like this woman, to resolve that if there be healing for thy soul thou wilt have it!

Alas! many have never come to this gracious resolution, because they cherish a vain hope, and are misled by an idle dream. They fancy that salvation will come

to them without their seeking it. Certainly, they have no right to expect such a thing. It is true that our Lord is found of them that sought him not; but that is an act of his own sovereignty, and is not a rule for our procedure. The plain directions of the gospel are, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." How dare they set these gracious words aside? They fancy that they may wake up, one of these fine days, and find themselves saved. Alas! it may more likely happen to them, as to the rich man in the parable, "In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." God grant that none of you may trifle your souls into such misery! Some fancy that in the article of death, they may cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and so may leap into salvation. It seems to them a very slight business to be reconciled to God. They imagine that they can be converted just when they will, and so they put it off from day to day, as if it were of no more consequence than going to shop to buy a coat or a gown. Believe me, the Word of God does not set forth the matter in this way. It tells us that even the righteous scarcely are saved, and it rouses us to strive to enter in at the strait gate. God save you from every false confidence which would prevent your being in earnest about the healing of your souls. Spiritually, your case is as desperate as that of the poor woman now before us. May the Lord sweetly constrain you to feel that you must be healed, and that you cannot afford to put off the blessed day! If beneath the firmament of heaven there is healing for a sin-sick soul, seek it till you find it. When the Lord brings you to this resolve by his good Spirit, you will not be far from the kingdom of heaven.

Let us next note, that *that this woman having made her*

resolve, adopted the likeliest means she could think of. Physicians are men set apart on purpose to deal with human maladies, therefore she went to the physicians. What better could she do? Though she failed, yet she did what seemed most likely to succeed. Now, when a soul is resolved to find salvation, it is most fit and proper that it should use every likely means for the finding of salvation. Oh, that they were wise enough to hear the gospel, and to come at once to Jesus; but often they make grave mistakes. This woman went to gentlemen who were supposed to understand the science of medicine. Was it not natural that she should look for help to their superior wisdom? She cannot be blamed for looking to the men of light and leading. Many, in these days, do the same thing. They hear of the new discoveries of professedly cultured men, and hear their talk about the littleness of sin, and the larger hope, and the non-necessity of the new birth. Poor deceived creatures! they find in the long run that nothing comes of it; for the wisdom of man is nothing but pretentious folly. The world by wisdom knows neither God nor his salvation. Many there are who know all the less of saving truth because they know so much of what human fancy has devised, and human search discovered. We cannot blame the woman that, being a simple soul and anxious for healing, she went to those first who were thought to know most. Let us not, with Christ so near, go roundabout as she did, but let us touch our Lord at once.

No doubt the sufferer also tried men who had diplomas, or were otherwise authorized to act as physicians. How can you blame her for going to those who were in the succession, and had the official stamp? Many sin-sick souls nowadays are, at first, very hopeful that the or-

dained clergy can benefit them by their duly performed services and duly administered sacraments. At least, good men, eminent in the church, may be looked to for aid; surely these know how to deal with souls! Alas! it is vain to look to men at all, and foolish to depend on official dignity, or special repute. Some teachers do not know much about their own souls, and therefore know less about the souls of others. Vain is the help of man, be the man who he may. Whatever his popularity, learning, or eloquence, if you seek to him for his prayers, or his teachings, as able to save you, you will certainly seek in vain; as this poor woman did. She is not to be blamed, but to be commended, that she did what seemed best to her, according to her light; but you are warned; go not, therefore, to men.

No doubt she met with some who boasted that they could heal her complaint at once. They began by saying, "You have tried So-and-so, but he is a mere quack; mine is a scientific remedy. You have used a medicine which I could have told you would be worthless; but I have the secret. Put yourself absolutely into my hands, and the thing is done. I have healed many that have been given up by all the faculty. Follow my orders, and you will be restored." Sick persons are so eager to recover that they readily take the bait which is offered them by brazen impudence. An oily tongue and a bland manner, backed with unblushing assurance, are sure to win their way with one who is anxious to gain that which is offered. Ah, me! "All is not gold that glitters;" and all the professions which are made of helping sin-sick souls are not true professions. Many pretenders to new revelations are abroad, but they are physicians of no value. There is no balm in Gilead; there is no physi-

cian there: if there had been, the hurt of the daughter of my people had long ago been healed. There is no medicine beneath the sky that can stay the palpitations of a heart which dreads the judgment to come. No earthly surgery can take away the load of sin from the conscience. No hand of priest or presbyter, prophet, or philosopher, can cleanse the leprosy of guilt. The finger of God is wanted here. There is one Heal-all, one divine *Catholicon*, and only one. Happy is he that hath received this infallible balm from Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that healeth. Yet we marvel not that when souls are pressed down with a sense of guilt, they try anything and everything which offers even a faint hope of relief. I could wish that all my hearers had an intense zeal to find salvation; for even if it led them into passing mistakes, yet, under God's blessing, they would find their way out of them, and end by glorifying the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which never fails.

This woman, in the next place, having resolved not to die, if cure could be had, and having adopted the likeliest means, *persevered in the use of those means.* No doubt she tried many, and even opposite remedies. One doctor said, "You had better go to the warm baths of the lake of Tiberias; such bathing will be comfortable and helpful." She grew worse at the warm bath, and went to another physician, who said, "You were wrongly treated; you need bracing up in the cold baths of the Jordan." Thus she went from vanity to vanity, to find both of them useless. An eminent practitioner assured her that she needed an internal remedy, and he alone could give her an infallible receipt. This, however, was of no use to her; and she went to another, who said that an external application should be tried, such as Isaiah's

lump of figs. What perseverance that woman must have had! I am not going to say anything about our doctors nowadays, no doubt they are the most learned and skilful that can be: but in earlier times surgery was murderous, and medicines were poisonous. Many of the prescriptions of those days are sickening, and yet ridiculous. I read yesterday a prescription, of our Saviour's time, warranted to cure many diseases, which consisted of grasshopper's eggs. These were supposed to exercise a marvellous influence, but they are no longer in the list of medicines. The tooth of a fox was said to possess special powers; but I noticed that one of the chief drugs of all, the most expensive, but the surest in its action, was a nail from the finger of a man who had been hanged. It was important that he should have been hanged: another finger-nail might have had no efficacy. Poor creatures were made to suffer most painfully by cruel medicines, which were far worse than the disease. As for surgical operations, if they had been designed to kill, they were certainly admirably arranged for that purpose. The wonder is that for twelve years poor human nature could stand out, not against the disease, but against the doctors. Brethren, the case is much the same spiritually. How many under their burden of sin go first to one, and then to another; practise this, and agonize after that, and pine for the other, perseveringly, and still without avail! Travel as fast as you may in a wrong direction, you will not reach the place you seek. Vain are all things save Jesus our Lord.

Have you been to Doctor Ceremony? He is, at this time, the fashionable doctor. Has he told you that you must attend to forms and rules? Has he prescribed you so many prayers, and so many services? Ah! many go

to him, and they persevere in a round of religious observances, but these yield no lasting ease to the conscience. Have you tried Doctor Morality? He has a large practice, and is a fine old Jewish physician. "Be good in outward character," says he, "and it will work inwardly, and cleanse the heart!" A great many persons are supposed to have been cured by him and by his assistant, Doctor Civility, who is nearly as clever as his master: but I have it on good evidence that neither of them apart, nor even the two together, could ever deal with an inward disease. Do what you may, your own doings will not stanch the wounds of a bleeding heart. Doctor Mortification has also a select practice; but men are not saved by denying themselves until they first deny their self-righteousness. Doctor Excitement has many patients, but his cures seldom outlive the set of sun. Doctor Feeling is much sought after by tender spirits; these try to feel sorrow and remorse; but, indeed, the way of cure does not lie in that quarter. Let everything be done that can be done apart from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and the sick soul will be nothing bettered. You may try human remedies for the space of a lifetime, but sin will remain in power, guilt will cling to the conscience, and the heart will abide as hard as ever.

But this woman not only thus tried the most likely means and persevered in the use of them, but *she also spent all her substance over it.* That was perhaps the chief thing in ancient surgery!—this golden ointment which did good to the physician, whatever became of the patient. The most important point was to pay the doctor. This woman's living was wasting away as well as her life. She continued to pay, and to pay, and to pay; but she received no benefit from it all; say, rather, that she

suffered more than she would have done had she kept her gold. Thus do men waste their thought, their care, their prayer, their agony over that which is nothing; they spend their money for that which is not bread. At last she came to her last shekel. In the end there was an end to her means; but so long as the silver lasted, she lavished it out of the bag. What would not a man give to be saved? I never wonder that dying men give their estates to priests in the hope that they can save their souls. If gold could purchase pardon, who would withhold it? Health of body, if it could be purchased with gold, would be cheap at any price; but health of soul, holiness of character, acceptance with God, assurance of heaven—these would be cheap if we counted out worlds as poor men pay down their pence for bread. There are men so mean that they would not part with a pound for a place in Paradise; but if these once knew their true condition, they would alter their minds. The price of wisdom is above rubies. If we had mines of gold, we might profitably barter them for the salvation of our souls.

Beloved, you see where this woman was. She was in downright, desperate earnest to have her mortal malady healed, and so she spared neither her labor nor her living. In this we may wisely imitate her.

II. We have seen what the woman had done; now let us think of WHAT HAD COME OF IT. We are told that she had suffered many things of many physicians. That was her sole reward for trusting and spending: she had not been relieved, much less healed; but *she had suffered.* She had endured much additional suffering through seeking a cure. That is the case with you who have not come to Christ, but, being under a sense of sin,

have sought relief apart from him. All that you do apart from Jesus, in order to win salvation, will only cause you increased suffering. You have tried to save yourself by prayers: your prayers have turned your thoughts upon your sin and its punishment, and thus you have become more wretched than before. You have attended to ceremonies, and if you have used them sincerely, they have wrought in you a solemn sense of the holiness of God, and of your own distance from him; and this, though very proper, has only increased your sorrow. You have been trying to feel good, and to do good, that so you may be good; but the very effort has made you feel how far off you are from the goodness you so much desire. Your self-denial has excited cravings after evil, and your mortifications have given new life to your pride. Efforts after salvation, made in your own strength, act like the struggles of a drowning man, which sink the more surely. As the fruit of your desperate efforts, you have suffered all the more. In the end, I trust this may work for your good, but up till now it has served no healing purpose: you are now at death's door, and all your praying, weeping, church-going, chapel-going, and sacrament-taking, do not help you one bit.

There has been this peculiarly poignant pang about it all, that you are *nothing bettered.* Cheerily did you hope, but cruelly are you disappointed. You cried, "I have it this time," but the bubble vanished as you grasped it. The evil of your nature, when repressed in one place, broke out in another. You dealt with the symptoms of your disease, but you did not cut off the root of the mischief: it only showed itself in another form, but it never went away. You gave up one sin only to fall into another: you watched at the front entrance, and the

thief stole in at the back door. Up till now, O soul, thou hast not come to Jesus, and after all thy goings elsewhere, thou art nothing bettered!

And now, perhaps, this morning you are saying, "What can I do? What shall I do?" I will tell you. You can do nothing except what this woman ultimately did, of which I will speak by-and-by. You are now brought to this extremity—that you are without strength, without merit, without power, and you must look out of yourself to another, who has strength and merit, and can save you. God grant that you may look to that glorious One before this service is over!

We read of this woman, that though she suffered much, she was nothing bettered, but *rather grew worse*. No better after twelve years of medicine? She went to the Egyptian doctor and he promised her health in three months. She was worse. She tried the Syrian doctor: he was a man who had great knowledge of the occult sciences, and was not ashamed to practice enchantments. She was bitterly disappointed to find herself decidedly weaker. Then she heard of a Greek practitioner, who would cure her, heigh presto! in a trice. She paid her remaining money, but she still went backward. She bought disappointment very dearly. Friend, is this your condition? You are anxious to be right, and therefore, you are earnest in every effort to save yourself; but still you are nothing bettered. You climb a treadmill, and are no higher after all you climbing. You drift down the river with one tide, and you float up again when it turns. Night after night you pull up in the same old creek that you started from. Oh, pitiful condition! Getting grey, too: becoming quite the old gentleman; and yet no nearer eternal life than when, as a lad, you

used to attend the house of God, and wish to become a child of God. Nothing bettered? No; she grew worse! Fresh mischief had developed: other diseases fed upon her weakness; she was more emaciated, more lifeless than ever. Sad result of so much perseverance! And is not that the case with some of you who are in earnest, but are not enlightened? You are working, and growing poorer as you work. There is not about you so much as there used to be of good feeling, or sincere desire, or prayerfulness, or love for the Bible, or care to hear the gospel. You are becoming more careless, more dubious than you once were. You have lost much of your former sensitiveness. You are doing certain things now that would have startled you years ago, and you are leaving certain matters undone which once you would have thought essential. Evidently you are caught in the current, and are nearing the cataract. The Lord deliver you!

This is a sad, sad case! As a climax of it all, the heroine of our story had now *spent all that she had*. She could not go now to the Egyptian doctor, or to the Syrian doctor, or to the Hebrew doctor, or to the Roman doctor, or to the Greek doctor. No; now she must do without their flattering unction in the future. As for those famous medicines which raised her hopes, she can buy no more of such costly inventions. This was, perhaps, her bitterest grief: but let me whisper it in your ear—this was the best thing that had yet happened to her; and I am praying that it may happen to some of you. At the bottom of your purse I trust you will find wisdom. When we come to the end of self we come to the beginning of Christ. That last shekel binds us to the pretenders, but absolute bankruptcy sets us free to go to him

who heals diseases without money and without price. Glad enough am I when I meet with a man who is starved out of self-sufficiency. Welcome, brother! Now you are ready for Jesus. When all your own virtue has gone out of you, then shall you seek and find that virtue which goeth out of him.

III. This brings to our notice, in the third place, WHAT THIS WOMAN DID AT LAST. Weaker and weaker had she become, and her purse had become lighter and lighter. She hears of Jesus of Nazareth, a man sent of God who is healing sick folk of all sorts. She hears attentively; she puts the stories together that she hears; she believes them; they have the likeness of truth about them. "Oh," says she, "there is yet another opportunity for me. I will get in the crowd, and if I can only touch the bit of blue which he wears as the border of his garment, I shall be made whole." Splendid faith! It was thought much of in her own day, and we may still more highly prize it now that faith has grown so rare.

Note well *she resolved to trust in Jesus in sheer despair of doing anything else.* My dear friend, I do not know where you are sitting this morning in this great congregation—I almost wish I did, that I might come up to you and say to you personally, "Try Jesus Christ, trust him, and see whether he will not save you. Every other door is evidently shut: why not enter by Christ the door? There is no other life-buoy; lay hold on this! Say with our versifier—

> "I can but perish if I go;
> I am resolved to try;
> For if I stay away, I know
> I must for ever die."

Exercise the courage which is born of desperation. May

God the Holy Spirit help you now to thrust forth your finger, and get into touch with Jesus! Say, "Yes, I freely accept Christ. By God's grace, I will have him to be my only hope. I will have him now." Be driven to Jesus by force of circumstances. Since there is no other port, O weather-beaten barque, make for this one! Wanderer, here is a refuge! Turn in hither, for there is no other shelter.

After all, *this was the simplest and easiest thing that she could do.* Touch Jesus. Put out thy finger, and touch the hem of his garment. The prescriptions she had purchased were long; but this was short enough. The operations performed upon her had been intricate; but this was simplicity itself. The suffering she had endured had complicated her case; but this was as plain as a pikestaff. "Touch with your finger the hem of his garment: that is all." O my hearer, you have tried many things, great things, and hard things, and painful things; why not try this simple matter of faith? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Trust Jesus to cleanse you, and he will do it. Put yourself into your Saviour's hands once for all, and he will save you.

Not only was this the simplest and easiest thing for the poor afflicted one, but certainly *it was the freest and most gracious.* There was not a penny to pay. Nobody stood at the door of the consulting-room to take her guinea; and the good physician did not even give a hint that he expected a reward. The gifts of Jesus are free as the air. He healed this believing woman in the open street, in the midst of the crowd. She had felt that if she could but get into the throng, she would, by hook or by crook, get near enough to reach the hem of his garment, and then she would be healed. It is so this morning, dear

hearer. Come, and receive grace freely. Bring no good works, no good words, no good feelings, no good resolves, as the price of pardon; come with an empty hand, and touch the Lord by faith. The good things which you desire, Jesus will give you as the result of his cure; but they cannot be the cause or the price of it. Accept his mercy as the gift of his love! Come empty handed, and receive! Come undeserving, and be favored! Only come into contact with Jesus, who is the fountain of life and health, and you shall be saved.

This was the quietest thing for her to do. She said nothing. She did not cry aloud like the blind men. She did not ask friends to look on, and see her make her venture. She kept her own counsel, and pushed into the press. In absolute silence, she took a stolen touch of the Lord's robe. O my hearer, you can be saved in silence. You have no need to speak to any person of your acquaintance, not even to mother or father. At this moment, while in the pew, believe and live. Nobody will know that you now are touching the Lord. In after days you will own your faith, but in the act itself you will be alone and unseen. Believe on Jesus. Trust yourself with him. Have done with all other confidences, and say, "He is all my salvation." Take Jesus at once, if not with a hand's grasp, yet with a finger's touch. O you poor, timid, bashful creature, touch the Lord! Trust in his power to save. Do not let me tell you to do it in vain, but do it at once. May God's Spirit cause you to accept Jesus now!

This is *the only effectual thing.* Touch Jesus, and salvation is yours at once. Simple as faith is, it is never failing. A touch of the fringe of the Saviour's garment sufficed; in a moment she felt in her body that she was

healed of that plague. "It is twelve years ago," she said to herself, "since I felt like a living woman. I have been sinking in a constant death all this while, but now I feel my strength come back to me." Blessed be the name of the great Healer! She was exceeding glad. Tremble she did, lest it should turn out to be too good to be true; but she was most surely healed. O my dear hearer, do trust my Lord, for he will surely do for you that which none other can achieve. Leave feeling and working, and try faith in Jesus. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so at once!

IV. And now, poor convicted sinner! here comes the driving home of the nail. DO THOU AS THIS WOMAN DID. Ask nobody about it, but do it. She did not go to Peter, James, and John, and say, "Good sirs, advise me." She did not beg from them an introduction to Jesus, but she went of her own accord, and tried for herself the virtue of a touch. You have had advising enough; now come to real work. There is too much tendency to console ourselves by conversations with godly men: let us get away from them, and speak to their Master. Talks in the inquiry-room, and chats with Christian neighbors, are all very well; but one touch of Jesus will be infinitely better. I do not blame you for seeking religious advice: this may be a half-way house to call at, but do not make it the terminus. Press on till, by personal faith, you have laid hold on Jesus. Do not tell anybody what you are about to do; wait till it is done. Another day you will be happy to tell the minister and God's people of what the Lord has done for you; but for the present, quietly believe in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Do not even ask yourself about it. If this poor woman

had consulted with herself, she might never have ventured so near the holy one of God. So clearly shut out from society by the law of her people and her God, if she had given the matter a second thought, she might have abandoned the idea. Blessed was the impetuosity which thrust her into the crowd, and kept her head above the throng, and her face towards the Lord in the centre of the press. She did not so much reason as dare. Do not ask yourself anything about it; but do it. Believe, and have done with it. Stop not to parley with your own unbelief, nor answer your rising doubts and fears; but at once, upon the instant, put out your finger, touch the hem of his garment, and see what will come of it. God help you to do so while I am speaking!

Yield to the sacred impulse which is just now operating upon you. Do not say, "To-morrow may be more convenient." In this woman's case, there was the Lord before her; she longed to be healed at once, and so, come what may, into the crowd she plunged. She was so enfeebled, that one wonders how she managed to get near him; but possibly the crowd took her off her feet and carried her onward, as often happens in a rush. However, there was her chance, and she seized it. There was the fringe of the Lord's mantle; out went her finger: it was all done. O my friend, you have an opportunity now, by God's great grace, for you are in his house of prayer. Jesus of Nazareth passeth by at this moment. He who speaks to you is not trying to say pretty things, but he is pining to win your soul for Jesus. Oh, how I wish I could lead you to that saving touch! The Spirit of God can do it. May he now move you to cry—"I will believe in the appointed sacrifices, and trust my soul with Jesus"! Have you done so? You

are saved "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

"Oh, but I tremble so!" So did she whom Jesus healed. Her hand shook, but she touched him all the same for that. I think I see her quivering finger. Poor emaciated woman, with pale and bloodless cheeks! What a taper finger was that which she held out, and how it quivered! However much the finger of your faith may tremble, if it does but touch the hem of the Lord's garment, virtue will flow from him to you. The power is not in the finger which touches, but in the divine Saviour who is touched. So long as there is a contact established between you and the almighty power of Jesus, his power will travel along your trembling finger, and bring healing to your heart. A telegraph wire may shake with the wind, and yet convey the electric current, and so may a trembling faith convey salvation from Jesus. A strong faith, which rests anywhere but in Jesus, is a delusion; but a weak faith, which rests alone on Jesus, brings sure salvation. Out with your finger! Dear soul, out with your finger! Do not go away till you have touched the Lord by a believing prayer or hope. Holy Spirit, do not suffer any to quit the Tabernacle until, by a believing desire, or trust, or confidence of some sort, they have established a contact between themselves and Jesus, and have felt the virtue enter them for their instant healing. O Lord, save this people! Why do you come Sunday after Sunday, in such crowds? and why must I stand here and bleed my heart away in love to your souls? Is the sole result to be that I help you to spend an hour-and-a-half in a sort of religious amusement? What a waste it is of my labor, and of your time, unless some gracious work is done! O

sirs, if you are not brought to Christ, my preaching will prove a curse to you! It appals me to think that the preaching of the gospel will be a savour of death unto you unless it brings you life. Put not the day of grace from you. By the living God, I do implore you, trust the living Redeemer. As I shall meet you all, face to face, before the judgment-seat of Christ, I do implore and beseech you, put out the finger of faith, and trust the Lord Jesus, who is so fully worthy to be trusted. The simple trust of your heart will stay the death which now works in you. Lord, give that trust, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

VI.

"SHE WAS NOT HID."

April 15, 1888.

"And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately."—LUKE viii. 47.

LAST Sabbath morning we spoke upon the woman who was healed of her issue of blood. After having spent all her living upon physicians, and being disappointed in them all, she touched the Saviour's garment and was healed immediately. She came behind him, for she did not wish to be seen. She said not a word: she had not the courage to ask for the blessing in an open manner. When cured, she slunk away into the crowd: she was anxious to be unobserved. Now, if the story had ended here, you would not have been surprised. It was a case of extreme delicacy, that might seem to require a specially secret ending, by the woman's being permitted to go her way home, happy and whole.

But now, suppose that in the tenderness of our Saviour's sympathy with this trembling woman, he had permitted her to depart without making an open confession, what would have been the consequence? The Saviour willed that the miracle should be recorded in three of the four Gospels, and if it had ended where we left it last Sabbath morning, then, such is our human nature, we should have drawn from it the inference that sav-

ing faith need not be confessed. Our natural love of ease, and our desire to avoid the cross, would have made us follow this woman's example, and we should have tried to touch the Lord for healing, and then run away from him without making any profession of discipleship. Many would have quoted her case as a reason why they might be allowed to escape the responsibilities, duties, and sufferings which discipleship might involve. If the Saviour had permitted this woman to retire in silence, many cowardly believers would have said that the Saviour's silence gave consent to her retiring without a word, and that they might safely imitate her. I know the men and their style of reasoning. This would have been fine nuts for them. Think how this story would have been used in times of martyrdom. The cowardly would have argued, "We may have to go to prison or to the stake if we confess Christ; why should we be so needlessly daring? We can receive grace from Jesus quite unknown to anybody, and having gained salvation we can mingle with the crowd and avoid exposing ourselves to danger." The Saviour would not allow us to find in this case an apology for an evil course, and so he called out the woman whom he had cured. The spirit of hiding, thank God, was not found in the church in martyr times; for holy men and women came forward and confessed their faith with more than common eagerness.

If the narrative had ended where we left it last Sunday, what a quietus it would have afforded to those good peace-loving people who, in these days of blasphemy and rebuke, will take no sides at all; "Anything for a quiet life." They are very comfortable, and mean to remain so. What does it matter to them though the whole church should be rotten with error? They hope to go

quietly to heaven—indeed, they feel they are going there; and, if they are not soldiers of the cross, yet they trust they are followers of the Lamb; if they do not contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, yet still they eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and enjoy the privileges of a comfortable religion. That is the present policy of many, and gladly enough would they have sheltered themselves behind this woman. She, however, was not hid, nor may they be. We have enough apologies for selfishness and ease, and compromise, without the Saviour's supplying us with one; and so he took special care in this instance that nothing so evil should be made out of it. What might have been a defence for guilty silence he turns into a grand argument for open confession. He will not allow concealment in this case, because he will not tolerate it in any case, but will have us take up our cross and follow him.

That is the subject for this morning: may I be helped of the Holy Spirit so to handle it, that any here who are sincere in their love to Christ, but yet have never avowed it, may be forced to come out at once, and before the Lord Jesus Christ and his people declare that they have touched him, and that they have been healed immediately.

Let me say to you, *her hiding seemed very excusable;* but, secondly, *her hiding was not permitted;* and, thirdly, *your hiding should not be excused nor permitted, but should come to an end at once.*

I. First, then, we say concerning this woman, that HER HIDING SEEMED VERY EXCUSABLE. I have already said that if, in any instance, a cure might have been concealed, this was one; and it was so for many reasons. First, because of *this woman's natural timidity, and be-*

cause of the nature of her malady. It would appear that if in any case the thing might have been done in a corner, or if done in a crowd, might have been passed over without remark, this was an evident case in point. Yet the Saviour, tenderly considerate as he is, will not have it so. And you, dear friend, may say, "I am naturally so very timid and retiring; pray excuse me." This woman was not only bashful, but her sickness made her rightly wish to remain in obscurity. "I should not like my story to be known," says one. She might have justly said the same: it must have been hard indeed for her to confess what the Lord had done. Yet she had to acknowledge his grace openly, and so must you. She is sick and faint, and for twelve years has been growing weaker and weaker, yet when she is healed she must come forward and confess the cure. Does this seem hard to you? Surely it is the least she can do, and she ought to do it of her own accord. Yet if silence might have been allowed in any case, hers was so delicate a matter that she might have had the doubtful privilege of receiving mercy without acknowledging it.

In addition to this, remember that *the Saviour did not court publicity.* He laid no injunction upon those whom he healed that they should tell every one of the marvel. He did not seek fame or observation: he did not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. In several cases he bade the healed ones tell no man what was done; and in this case he had given the cure without any open request for it. Might she not from this conclude that her secret act of faith was approved, and that it might continue secret, since it had gained the boon? You may reason in that way about yourself, and say that Jesus does not need that you should testify for

him. Indeed, it is true that he does not need anything of any of us; but is this a fit way of treating your Lord? You may say that quietude on your part would be excusable; but as the Saviour did not think so in this woman's case, I believe that he will not think so in your case. I trust that in his mercy he will deal with you as with her, and compel you to come out and own the wonders of his grace.

There was another reason why she might have thought she need not make a public confession, and that was, that *the Saviour was at that time exceedingly occupied.* The multitude thronged him, and he was on the way to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, to attend to his child; she would only be stopping him in his career of love. Should the Saviour be detained for her? Already Jairus did not look upon her very cheerfully when he saw that Jesus stopped for her; what would he do if she caused a still longer delay? Besides, she might naturally argue, "Why should such an insignificant person as I am detain the prophet? What am I that I should take up even a second of his time? Jairus is before me; let him take his turn. I have the blessing, and there is no need to detain the Lord." You know how ready we are to make excuses when a duty is not pleasant: I suppose you are very handy at it yourself. But now since this excuse, if it ever occurred to the woman, was soon disposed of, I would advise you also to cast away all subterfuges, and remember that it is written, "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved," or quoting an equally plain Scripture, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The faith and the confession are put together by the Holy

Spirit: what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Excuse might also have been found for the healed woman in the fact, that *her cure would make itself known by its results.* When she reached home everybody would see that she was quite another person: and when they asked how it came to pass, she could tell them all about it. They would see in her life the best evidences of the work of our Lord upon her. Is it not better to speak by your life than by your lips? Exactly so, and herein lies the apparent force of this excuse for disobedience. It needs some truth to keep a falsehood on its legs. Note well that this woman was not permitted to withhold the open avowal of her indebtedness to Christ, even though it was certain that her health and her conduct would witness to his power. I know what you say: "I need not join a church: I can be a Christian at home. Better live a Christian life than wear a Christian name." My friend, we never proposed to you that you should put the wearing of a Christian name in the place of a Christian life—we have solemnly spoken the reverse of such a notion. We would earnestly remind you of our Saviour's words, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." Attention to one duty is no justification for the neglect of another. I charge you, disobey not in any point. Confess your Lord; own what he has done for you; and be sure that the outcome of your life supports your confession. Have the shaft of godly living by all means, but crown it with the capital of a brave confession.

Another pretext might have served this woman, if she desired an excuse. She might truthfully have said, "It is evident that *an open confession is not essential to my*

cure, for I am cured. She was healed immediately, and it is added, that she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague: so that she knew that she was healed, and it was clear that an avowal of her faith was not necessary to her receiving that great boon from the Lord. Hence, many argue, "To confess Christ and join with his people is not necessary to my salvation." Who said it was? Open confession is not necessary, nay, is not permitted, till you are saved. How could this woman have made any confession of a cure till she was cured? But being cured, it then became necessary that she should confess it: not necessary to the cure, that is clear, but necessary because of the cure. It is always necessary for a disciple to do what his Lord bids him. It is essential for a soldier of the cross to follow his Captain's orders. Jesus bids us let our light shine; dare we hide it away? If we have received grace at his hands he would have us confess that we have received it, and surely our sense of justice makes it needful for us to own our obligation.

Thus I have shown you that in her case many excuses might have been made; and yet, after all, it would not have been a fitting thing if she had stolen away in the crowd, and gone home cured without praising and blessing her Lord. It would have been to her everlasting dishonor. I think she felt this when the Saviour fixed those dear eyes of his upon her and said, "Somebody hath touched me." What a vision of loving-kindness and peace it was to her! In a moment she must have thought, "How foolish I was to go behind him! The very look of his face is comfort, the glance of his eye is joy. He would have granted my request with a smile." When she saw what he was like, and perceived the right

royal bearing of The Bountiful One, she blushed that she had thought to steal a cure from one so ready to give it. The sight of him was rebuke enough for her clandestine snatching at the blessing. As to going away then without thanking him, why, methinks the moment she saw his majestic mercy, the divine royalty of his goodness, she could not do otherwise than fall at his feet and worship such a glorious Lord. Within herself she felt that it was a marvellous cure which had come to her by a touch of him, and she could not praise him enough. The stones would have cried out against her is she had not confessed his miracle of gracious power, and the earth would have refused to bear up such a monster of ingratitude. Instantly she fell down before him, and told him all the truth. The thoughts of her heart were revealed by her Lord, and never was Jesus more truly adored than by this poor creature, whose silence stood rebuked by her Lord's love, and condemned by his immeasurable goodness.

II. Secondly, HER HIDING WAS NOT PERMITTED BY THE SAVIOUR. I told you, in the opening of the discourse, that to have let her story finish without bringing her out would have been an encouragement to that practical denial of Christ which consists in concealing our faith in him. The unearthing of this woman from her hiding place was wrought by the Saviour himself, and therefore, with all its apparent roughness, we may be sure that it was the kindest thing that could have been done. Her being brought out had the best of consequences.

For, first, an open confession on her part was needful *in reference to the Lord's glory.* Beloved, the miracles of Christ were the seals which God gave to his mission. He was a man sent of God, and the wondrous things that

he did proved that God was with him. If the wonders which he wrought were not made known, the seals of his mission would have been concealed, and so would have lost much of their effect. How would men know that he was the very Christ, if they never heard that the sick were healed? If this woman concealed her cure others might do the same; and if they all did it, then Christ's commission would have no visible endorsement from the Lord God. I should like to impress this idea upon those of you who do not confess your Lord: whatever is right for you to do is right for other people to do. If it is right for one Christian not to confess Christ, and join a church, it must be allowable for other Christians to do the same. Where would be churches, where would be the continuance of gospel ordinances; and for the matter of that, who would be bound to be a preacher if no one is even bound to make an open profession? If *you* may go to heaven by the back stairs so may I, and God's grand entrance to the kingdom may be deserted. Who will care to go to heaven by the open way, with all its responsibility and opposition, if you can just as easily take the snug road behind the hedges, and slink into glory without observation? It will not do, brethren, if we consider what the Lord Jesus Christ deserves of us, and how our open confession tends to certify his mission. The change wrought in the spiritual and moral condition of the saved is God's attestation of the gospel; and if this is not to be spoken of, how is the world to know that God has sent the gospel at all?

Further, remember that *our Lord's miracles were illustrative of his teaching.* Properly viewed, the miracles of Christ are the pictures of a volume of which his sermons are the letterpress. You take *The Illustrated London*

News, and you get the description of a public building, or the account of a grand ceremony: you are glad of the printed account, but you are much helped to form an idea of the whole business by the engravings. You would not like to lose the woodcut, which is the chief feature of value in the paper. Now, in our Saviour's ministry his words were the letterpress, and his miracles were the engravings. If the engraving is to be torn away, or pasted over, a great injury is done to the paper; and even so our Lord's teaching would be greatly marred if its miracles were concealed. I showed you, last Lord's morning, that the healing of this woman was a wonderfully instructive incident; how could it remain unknown? Must it be passed over to gratify her fear? Must Jesus work this wonder, and nobody ever hear about it? As God is seen in his works of creation, Jesus is seen in his miracles of grace. Shall we rob him of his glory? God forbid that we should do him this serious dishonor. When first I knew the Lord, if anybody had said to me, "You will be ashamed to confess Christ, although he has saved you. The day will come when you will blush to own his name," I should have felt indignant at the suggestion. Why, I wanted to tell everybody of the Saviour's love. If there had been nobody else to hear me, I should have told the cat. I felt like Bunyan did when he said he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about it. I cannot understand how it is that you who know the Saviour, or think you do, can imagine it to be right to hide away, and cover up the glory of Christ. Oh, tell it! Tell it all the world over that he has healed us, forgiven us, and saved us.

But the confession had to be made *for the sake of others.* Do any of you wish to live unto yourselves? If you do,

you need saving from selfishness. I have seen it brought as a charge against evangelical religion that we teach men to look to their own salvation first, and that this is a kind of spiritual selfishness. Ah, but if that salvation means salvation from selfishness, where is the selfishness of it? It is a very material point in salvation to be saved from hardness of heart and carelessness about others. Do you want to go to heaven alone? I fear you will never go there. Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that. What is the most natural plan to use for the salvation of others but to bear your own personal testimony? Our Lord healed this woman for the good of the whole crowd. They must have all been astonished when they heard her story. He did it especially for the good of Jairus. Jairus' little daughter had been living twelve years, and this poor woman had been dying twelve years —note the exact time in each case. Surely there was a loud call to Jairus in this cure to exercise faith in Jesus, and it must have greatly helped his faith, which was not quite so strong as it seemed.

Do you not think that her public declaration was required *for the good of our Lord's disciples?* When they heard her story, did they not treasure it up, and speak of it to one another in after days, and thereby strengthen each other's faith? The remembrance of these remarkable miracles, which they saw their Master work, would serve them in good stead in times of persecution. Beloved, had not the Lord an eye even to you and to me, who were to be born by his grace centuries later on? Do you not think that he fetched the healed one out on purpose that this being but into the gospel might bring out hidden ones throughout all generations? Did

not our Lord foresee that many would be encouraged to touch the hem of his garment by faith through hearing of her cure? Thus, you see, the trembling woman must own her Lord, that her Lord's household may be blest thereby.

But especially she had to do this *for her own good.* The Saviour had designs of love in bringing this poor trembler forward before all the people. By this he saved her from a host of fears which would have haunted her. Suppose she had gone home healed, and had never confessed it; surely she would have felt uneasy? A sense of having stolen the boon without leave or license would have caused her uneasy dreams and sad apprehensions. She would worry herself with the fear that the disease would soon return again, or that she would die from a fearful judgment. Besides, she would have said to herself, "I was little better than a thief. I did not come in by the door, but climbed over the wall. I am afraid it will go hard with me at the day of judgment. Will a man rob God? Have not I robbed the Saviour himself?" All such fears were rendered impossible by her open confession, and that which followed upon it. Jesus assured her that he had taken no offence; he wished her to have no fears, for, said he, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

She had been a very timid and trembling woman, but now she would shake off all improper timidity. I have known many persons cured of timidity by coming forward to confess Christ. I could mention cases of persons who have been very retiring, and scarcely able to say a word upon any subject, but when they joined the church and were baptized, their open confession broke the ice, and the waters of their life were set in motion. Our Lord

removes this infirmity by our obedience: "in keeping his commandments there is great reward."

Our Lord also gave her an increased blessing after her confession. Perhaps the Lord is reserving some great favor for some of you when you avow his name. You hide indoors, and he allows you milk enough to live upon; but if you would come out and confess him, he would feed you with the strong meat of the kingdom. You would become a braver and more useful person if you would take up your cross. You are now like Saul, the son of Kish, hiding among the stuff: come out and be a king. Confess what Christ has done for you. For what did the Saviour give her?

He gave her clearly to know her relationship to him. He said, "Daughter!" I do not know that the Saviour ever called any other woman daughter, for he was guarded in his speech to women; but to this one woman he said, "Daughter." Oh, may the Lord give trembling ones to see and feel the near and dear relationship which exists between Christ and their souls! May your sonship come up before your minds most vividly, as a reward of obedience. May Jesus say to some of you, "Son, be of good comfort;" or to another, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath saved thee." "What would I give," says one, "if Jesus would call me 'daughter!'" Give him your whole self by believing in him, and confession of him, and see if he does not reveal to you his love. What choice revelations you lose through sinful silence I cannot tell you; but assuredly you miss many a cheering word from your Lord's own lip. If you will not own him, how can you expect him to give you the spirit of adoption? If you receive instead the spirit of bondage you cannot wonder.

Next, note that our Lord gave her joyousness. He said, "Daughter, be of good comfort." Smooth those wrinkles from thy brow, my daughter.

> "Why should the children of a king
> Go mourning all their days?"

"Be of good comfort." Ah, friends! you hang your heads. Perhaps if you had grace enough to own Jesus more fully, you would hold your heads up, and the sun would shine into your faces, and you would march joyfully all the rest of your lives. I advise you to try it. One of the best medicines for low spirits will be found in a courageous obedience to Jesus. Keep close to the Crucified and your own cross will grow light in fellowship with him.

Next, notice that he gave a commendation to her faith: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Why, it was not her faith which made her whole, was it? No, but Jesus puts his own crown upon the head of faith. It is always safe for Jesus to crown faith, because faith always crowns Jesus. Her faith would answer, "Lord, I did nothing, thou didst it all," and, therefore, Jesus ascribes her healing to her faith. How much I desire that you, who are now afraid of your own faith, would win your Lord's praise by coming out and bearing witness to what he has done for you! Then will you not only believe, but also know that you have believed, and end for ever your present state of miserable doubt.

Then the Lord gave her a word of precious quieting. He said, "Go in peace." As much as to say: Do not stop in this crowd, to be pushed about or stared at, but go home in quiet. Go home to your house, and to your friends, with a light heart. All is well. You enjoy my favor. I have called you daughter, and I will never dis-

own you. I have blessed you, and you shall be blessed. I give you peace on earth, and peace in heaven. O you that do love the Lord, and trust him, but yet have never declared your faith according to his command, you say, "We do not know how it is, but while we hear of God's people having great peace, we do not enjoy it." You cannot expect to have peace, and yet be disobedient. If you do not side with Jesus, do you expect him to be at your side? You shall have bread and water, so that your soul shall be kept alive; but you cannot taste the wines on the lees, nor the fat things full of marrow, so long as you do not confess your Lord. The dainties of the cupboard are not for disobedient children. Are you ashamed of Jesus? How, then, can you expect him to give you the kisses of his mouth? That he should save you will be more than his promise; but as he loves you, he must and will discipline you unless you confess his name and his work. Why do you lose present comfort by neglect? All in the train of faith will go to heaven; but why do so many ride third-class, or even get into cattle-trucks? Why not ride first-class? To be out-and-out for Christ is to ride first-class. Confess your Lord. Determine never to hide your colors. Be heart and soul a Christian. Live for Jesus, and be ready to die for him: this is to go to heaven first-class; and why should you not? Why will you be fretting and fuming, moaning and mourning, when you might as well be singing and dancing and feasting in the presence of your Lord and his household? Do you hesitate to own your Lord and Master? Ah, me! how shall I sufficiently grieve over you? Let not another day pass over your head till you have left Cowards' Castle and come into the ranks of the army of the Lord of hosts.

III. Thus I have already reached my last point: YOUR HIDING OUGHT TO BE ENDED. "Whom are you speaking to, sir?" Well, not to you, dear friends, who are always to the front, lifting the banner of the cross. "Whom are you speaking to, sir?" To you, my friend, if you are really a disciple, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. If you keep yourself to yourself, it is to you that I am speaking, and I desire to press upon you your obligations. *What owest thou to my Lord?* You are washed from your uncleanness. You are clothed with the robe of righteousness. You are accepted in the Beloved. You know that you have passed from death to life. Unless fearfully mistaken, you know that you are the Lord's. Well, then, own it. Do not be ashamed to take your place in the cross-bearing procession, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. By your love to Jesus, do not turn to the right, seeking your own ease; nor to the left, aiming at the peace of others, but go straight on where duty and Jesus lead you. This is still the way to honor and immortality.

Do you not think *you owe something to the church of God*, which kept the gospel alive in the world for you to hear? Did not a band of godly men and women meet together, and see that the gospel was preached? Was it not so that you were saved? Should you not help to keep that church going by whose means you were brought to Jesus?

May I be permitted also to say, I think *you owe something to the minister who led you to Jesus?* What a cheer it is to us when we get a letter from one who has found the Lord through our teaching; and better still, when face to face we meet one who has trusted the Saviour through our poor instrumentality! Those who are sowers

of the seed know what a joy it is to see it spring up. Who are the people who cause us needless depression? Who are those who withhold needful encouragement? Why, those who do not come out and tell what grace has done for them. For the sake of those who labor among you in word and doctrine, I beseech you come forward. Common gratitude should lead you to let us know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord..

Besides, *you owe it to yourselves.* Are you going to be mere bats, fluttering out when none will observe you, and hiding from the light? Are you going to be like mice, which only come out at night to nibble in the pantry? Quit yourselves like men! O you that are hidden in the clefts of the rocks, let the Saviour hear your voices, and see your countenances!

You owe it to your family. You should tell your household what grace has done for you. Many a person wonders that his sons and daughters do not turn out well, when he himself has never been openly on the Lord's side. "Oh," says one, "but then I am right in my heart." But is the light within to be shut up in a dark lantern? Who is to read a closed book? We want to see in the shop-window of your life some of the goods which are stored in the warehouse of your heart, or how can you trade for your Lord? When a man boldly says, "I believe in Jesus," and proves it by his actions, it has a holy influence upon his children, his servants, his companions: do you not desire to influence them aright?

Do you not think *you owe it to your neighbors to show your colors?* Why, there are whole streets in this city where scarcely a single person goes to a place of public worship. Should he slink there as if half ashamed of it? What is to become of us if the little salt loses its savor?

There are regions in this city in which dwell hundreds of thousands of inhabitants in which attendance at public worship is so scanty that the churches and chapels have only a sprinkling of people. Should not you that love the Lord be very earnest to let it be known that there is still a God to be worshipped, a Saviour to be trusted? In these evil days above all others—

> "Ye that are men now serve him,
> Against unnumbered foes;
> Your courage rise with danger,
> And strength to strength oppose."

Many crowd around him when Christ is on the winning hand. What is the worth of their hosannas? The style of man that a crucified Christ delights in is he who follows his Lord in the day of blasphemy and reproach. A true soldier of Jesus can stand up for his Lord alone. He is as true to Jesus when he is the only one as he would be if all the million went after him. Blessed is he who is not offended with Jesus, nor ashamed of his cross. O ye saved ones, run up your colors; fly them at the mast-head, nail them there; and never let the enemy take them down. Oh that God would move every one here that has been a little shy or backward to go without the camp and bear the Lord's reproach!

Now let me *hear some of your objections, and answer them.* I hope I have been answering them all through my sermon. Here is one. "Well, you know, Mr. Spurgeon, I am such an insignificant person. It cannot make any difference what I do." Yes, and this woman was a very insignificant person—only a woman! When I speak thus in English, it is a very ungallant speech, but if a Rabbi had said it in Christ's day, it would not have seemed at all out of place, for they taught that no holy

person ought, in the streets, to allow a woman's dress to touch him, lest he should be defiled thereby. They thought that if a scribe tried to teach a woman the law, he dishonored the law by doing so. Religious men lightly esteemed women in the Saviour's day. Our divine Lord never gave the slightest sanction to such an abominable spirit, and I am not going to lend any sanction to your saying "I am only a poor feeble woman." God thinks much of the lowly: you must not talk so. Besides, many of you do not think so meanly of yourselves as you pretend to do when you want to avoid your duty. Do not excuse yourselves through pretended humility. If the Lord bought you with his blood, you are not so insignificant that you can be allowed to deny him your service.

"But coming out and joining a church, and all that, is such an ordeal." So it may be. In this woman's case, it was a far greater ordeal than it can be to you. Picture her, with her delicacy of feeling, called into the midst of all that crowd to confess her cure! Ready to sink into the earth! An unclean person who had broken the ceremonial law! How she longed to hide herself away! Yet the tender Lord, for her own sake, would have her stand forth, and what seemed an ordeal became a joy. Jesus does not excuse one of his healed ones from owning the work of his grace. A dear lady, who has long since gone to glory, was once an honored member of this church: it was Lady Burgoyne, and when she wished to unite with us she said to me, "Dear sir, I cannot go before the church. It is more than I can manage to make a confession of Christ before the members." I told her that we could make no exception for anybody, and especially not for her, who was so well established in

the faith that she could surely answer a few questions before those who were her brethren and sisters in the Lord. She came bravely, and spoke most sweetly for her Lord. Some of you may remember her, with her sweet countenance, and venerable bearing. When she had owned her Lord, she put both her hands on mine, and said emphatically, "With all my heart I thank you for this; I shall never be ashamed of Christ now. When aristocratic friends call upon me I will speak to them of my Lord." She did so constantly. You never found her slow to introduce the gospel, whoever might be with her. She frequently said to me, "Oh, what a training that was for me! I might have been a timid one all my days if I had not made that confession before the church." Now I say to you, if it be an ordeal, undergo it for Christ's sake. But indeed, it should be a pleasure to own your Lord among his own disciples.

"Alas!" says one, "I could not tell of what the Lord has done for me, because mine is such a sorrowful story. You know what I used to be, sir, sovereign grace has made me to differ, but my former life silences me!" Was it not so with this woman? How could she tell her story? But then it was to the glory of God, and so, "she told him all the truth." Whatever you were before you were converted, never boast of it; but at the same time do not deny it, but honor your Saviour. Remember how often Paul tells us what he was before conversion. If any rake up your old sin, answer that it is sadly true, but you have been washed, and much has been forgiven you. Own that you were the chief of sinners, and that even now you are less than the least of all saints, but the Lord has brought you from death to life, to the glory of his name.

"I have so little to tell," says one. That is a good reason why you should tell it, for it will be all the easier for you to do so. He that has little to tell should tell it straight away. I will give you no other answer than that. But still, if you can tell that the Lord Jesus has washed you in his precious blood, I do not think it is a little thing to tell. If you can say, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," say it, and do not think it a little thing. Once you thought it the greatest fact you could possibly know: think so still. Don't garnish the story, but state it just as it happened.

"But perhaps people may not believe me." Did I tell you that you were to make them believe you? Is that your business? You are to do right, whatever the consequences may be. But they will believe you, if you deserve to be believed. When we meet together as believers, and hear the story of a sinner saved by grace, we are none of us suspicious: sometimes we are a little too quick to believe, and are apt to be deceived. Do not fear that you will be distrusted. Confess your faith at any rate, and God will bless your testimony.

"Ah!" says one, "but suppose after I had confessed Christ I should become as bad as ever." Suppose that this woman had supposed such a sad thing, and had said, "O Lord I cannot confess that thou hast healed me, for I do not know how I may be in six months' time." She was not so mistrustful. "But suppose the Lord should leave me, and suffer me to leave him." Yes, and suppose you were to leave off supposing anything of the sort, and just take his promise as it stands. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do you believe his word? Then lay aside such suspicions. Jesus does not

give us a trumpery, temporary salvation; he does not save us for a quarter of a year and then leave us. If saved by him, you will be for ever saved! He is the Author of eternal salvation. If he gives you a new heart it is a new heart, and will never become an old one. If he puts the water of life within you, he does not put it there as you sprinkle the pavement before your shop in the morning, which is soon dried up, but he says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When I trusted Christ, I did not trust him to save me for a year or two, but for ever. When you go the heavenly journey, take a ticket all the way through. Some of our friends take a ticket to the next station, and rush out to get another, Take your ticket for the New Jerusalem, and not for a halfway-house. The train will never break down, and the track will never be torn up. If you can trust Jesus Christ to carry you through to glory, he will do it. Let not that fear disturb you.

"Ah!" says one more, "it seems too good to be true. I cannot think that such a one as I may dare to link myself with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is so great and so glorious." Yet this is your only hope. You are only saved through being in Christ. This may be too great, too good for us to imagine, but then we need not imagine it; it is clearly revealed in the infallible Word of God. He that believeth in Jesus is one with him. Come, then, and own that blessed oneness.

Be one with Christ to-day in his humiliation, and you shall be one with him by-and-by in his glory. Be despised and ridiculed for his sake, and you shall be honored and glorified with him in the day when he appeareth. God bless you for Christ's sake! Amen.

VII.

"DAVID'S SPOIL."

April 15, 1888.

"This is David's spoil."—1 SAMUEL xxx. 20.

WE have aforetime gathered spoil for ourselves out of David's behavior in the hour of his sorrow at Ziklag, and we will now turn to the other side of this leaf in his history, and receive instruction from the time of his victory. But we must not do this till we have refreshed our memories with the story of his conduct under distress. When he came to the city he found it burned with fire, the property of himself and comrades carried away, and, what was worse, all their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, gone into captivity. In the madness of their grief the people turned upon their leader, as if he had led them into this calamity. He was the only calm person among them, for he "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." With due deliberation he waited upon the Lord, and consulted the oracle through the appointed priest, and then, under divine guidance, he pursued the banditti, took them at unawares, recovered all his people's goods, and captured a large booty which the Amalekites had collected elsewhere. David, who had been the chief object of the people's mutiny, and the leader of the successful pursuit of the robbers, most properly received a special portion of the spoil, and concern-

ing it the words of our text were spoken, "This is David's spoil."

We shall now look into this victorious act on the part of David with the view of finding spiritual teaching in it. David may be regarded as a very special type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Among the personal types David holds a leading place, for in so many points he is the prophetic foreshadowing of the great and glorious Son of David. Whenever David acts as the man after God's own heart, he is the picture and emblem of the One who is still more after God's own heart, even the Christ of God. David, under divine guidance, pursued the Amalekites, who had come as thieves to smite and to burn, and carry away captive. The marauders were overtaken and slaughtered, and a great spoil was the result. David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken. "And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all." We are told several times over in the chapter that nothing was lacking: "David recovered all." When our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption, he recovered all, and left nothing in the enemy's hand. All glory to his name! But over and above, David took great store of cattle, and jewels, and gold, and silver, and so forth, which belonged to the Amalekites, and out of this a bountiful portion was taken which was set apart as David's spoil. David's men, in the moment of their despair, had spoken of stoning him; but now, in the morning of their victory, with general acclamations, they determine that David shall have, as his portion of the spoil, all the cattle which belong to the Amalekites themselves; and so, driving these in front, as they return to Ziklag, they

say, "This is David's spoil." I think I hear them, as they drive the bullocks and the sheep before them, shouting right lustily, "This is David's spoil."

Now, using David as the type of Christ, I want, if I can, to set all David's men—all Christ's men—shouting with all their hearts, "This is Jesus' spoil!" He it is of whom Jehovah saith, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." He has a grand reward as the result of the great battle of his life and death. We will even now award to him the spoil, and cry, "This is David's spoil;" feeling, all the while, as the Psalmist did, when he said, "Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey."

I. We begin with the first observation that, practically, all the spoil of that day was David's spoil, and in truth ALL THE GOOD THAT WE ENJOY COMES TO US THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS. He has been given as a Leader and a Commander to the people, and every victory they win is due to him, and to him alone. Without him we can *do* nothing, and without him we can *obtain* nothing. All that we once possessed by nature, and under the law, the spoiler has taken away. By our own efforts we can never regain what we have lost; only through our great Leader can we be restored and made happy. We ascribe unto Jesus all our gains, even as David's men honored their captain.

For, first, David's men defeated the Amalekites, and took their spoil, but *it was for David's sake that God gave success to the band.* God's eye rested upon his chosen servant, the Lord's anointed, and it was not for the warriors' own sakes, but for David's sake, that God guided them to the hosts of Amalek, and gave them like driven stubble to their sword. How much more true it is to us

that every blessing, every pardoning mercy, every delivering mercy, is given to us through him who is our shield and God's anointed! It is for the sake of Jesus that we are pardoned, justified, accepted, preserved, sanctified. Only through this channel does the mercy of God come to us. The Lord God saith, "Not for your sakes do I this, O house of Israel! Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways;" and we, in response to that, can answer, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto the name of the Well-beloved be praise, and honor, and glory, for ever and ever!" Since everything comes to us because of Christ Jesus, we may say of every covenant mercy, "This is David's spoil." On this blessing, and on that favor, yea, on them all, we see the mark of the cross. These are all fruits of our Redeemer's passion, the purchase of his blood. Again we say with gratitude, "This is David's spoil."

Moreover, *David's men gained the victory over Amalek because of David's leadership.* If he had not been there to lead them to the fight, in the moment of their despair they would have lost all heart, and would have remained amidst the burning walls of Ziklag, a discomfited company. But David encouraged himself in the Lord, and so encouraged all his desponding followers. Drawing his sword, and marching in front, he put spirit into them: they all followed with eager step because their gallant leader so courageously led the way. This is exactly our case, beloved, only we are even more indebted to our Lord Jesus than these men were to David. The Lord Jesus Christ has been here among us, and has fought our battle for us, and recovered all that we had lost by Adam's fall and by our own sin. It is written of him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." You know how

he set his face like a flint, how stout-hearted he was to accomplish the work of our redemption, and how he ceased not till he could cry victoriously, "It is finished."

"Our glorious Leader claims our praise
For his own pattern given."

Following at his feet, we, too, fight with sin. Treading in his footsteps we, too, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Have you never heard him say, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? And you, dear brothers and sisters, whatever victories you win, whatever spoils you divide, will own that it is through Jesus that you have conquered. They said of Waterloo that it was a soldiers' battle, and the victory was due to the men; but ours is our Commander's battle, and every victory won by us is due to the great Captain of our salvation. Let the crown be set upon his head, even on the battle-field, and let us say of every sin that we have overcome, every evil habit that we have destroyed "This is David's spoil." We had never won this victory if Jesus had not led us: we have it for his sake. We have it under his leadership. Without exception, all the saints on earth and in heaven confess this to be true.

"I ask them whence their victory came?
They, with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death.

They mark'd the footsteps that he trod,
His zeal inspired their breast,
And, following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest."

I will not say more upon this point, but only ask you to remember that by nature we had all lost everything.

We lost the garden with all its Paradisiacal joys; lost this world, the very earth bringing forth thorns and thistles to us; lost life, lost hope, lost peace, lost the favor of God. But Jesus has recovered all. All that the first Adam lost, the second Adam has restored. David recovered all, and Jesus has recovered all. We ourselves were lost; but Jesus has brought us back from the hand of the enemy. He has given us ourselves, if I may use such an expression, and now we who were dead are alive again, the lost are found. Once, every faculty of ours was being used for our own destruction, but now, sanctified by the grace of God, all is being used for God's glory, and for our own ripening and perfecting. Jesus has recovered us for ourselves and for our God: the prey has been taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive has been delivered.

Yes, and our Lord Jesus has recovered for us the future as well as the past. Our outlook was grim and dark indeed till Jesus came; but oh, how bright it is now that he has completed his glorious work! Death is no more the dreaded grave of all our hopes. Hell exists no longer for believers. Heaven, whose gates were closed, is now set wide open to every soul that believeth. We have recovered life and immortal bliss. We are snatched like brands from the burning, and are made to shine like lamps of the palace of the great King. We are set up to be for ever trophies of the conquering power of Jesus, our glorious David. Look at all the saints in heaven in their serried ranks, and say of them all, "This is David's spoil." Look at the blood-bought church of God on earth—the ten thousands that are already washed in his blood, and following at his feet—we may say of all this ransomed flock, "This is David's spoil." Each one

of us, looking at himself, and all his past, and all his future, may say, "This, too, is David's spoil." Christ has done it, and done it all, and unto his name let the whole host shout the victory.

I feel as if I could stop the sermon, and ask you to sing, but it will be better if I content myself with repeating, the hymn—

"Rejoice, ye shining worlds on high,
Behold the King of glory nigh!
He comes adorned with victory,
He made our foes before him flee.

"Ye heavenly gates, your leaves display,
To make the Lord the Saviour way!
Laden with spoils from earth and hell,
The Conqueror comes with God to dwell.

"Raised from the dead, he goes before;
He opens heaven's eternal door:
To give his saints a blest abode,
Near their Redeemer and their God."

II. But the most interesting part of our subject is this: all the booty was practically David's spoil, but there was a part of it which was not recovered, but was a clear gain. They recovered all they had lost, and over and above there was a surplus of spoil from the defeated foe. Now, in the great battle of Christ on our behalf, he has not only given us back what we lost, but he has given us what Adam in his perfection never had. And I want you to dwell upon that, because this part of it is peculiarly our Lord's spoil. THOSE GOOD THINGS WHICH WE NOW POSSESS, OVER AND ABOVE WHAT WE LOST BY SIN, COME TO US BY THE LORD JESUS. Now that the Son of God has come into the field, he is not

content with restoration, he turns the loss into a gain, the fall into a greater rising.

And first, dear friends, think: *In Christ Jesus human nature is lifted up where it never could have been before.* Man was made in his innocence to occupy a very lofty place. "Thou madest him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." Man would have enjoyed that dominion had he never fallen, but he never could have obtained what he has now gained, for "we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." And we see in Jesus human nature joined in mysterious union with the Godhead. I never know how to speak about this miracle of the divine incarnation. We are men and women, poor creatures at our very best; yet in Christ Jesus our dignity is perfectly amazing. Angels excel in strength and beauty, but no angel was ever joined to the Godhead as manhood is now united to God. The nearest being to God is man. The noblest existence—how shall I word it?—the noblest of all beings is God, and the God-man Christ Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is with him upon his throne. It is a wondrous honor this—that manhood should be taken into intimate connection, yea, absolute union with God! For listen: through Jesus Christ we are this day made the sons of God, which angels never were. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son?" But he has said this to us. Christ took not up angels, but he took up the seed of Abraham, and he has made the believing seed of Ahraham to be the sons of God. Listen again: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God." God's heirs! What a word is this! How simple, but

how sublime! I know how to say it, but not how to expound it! It does not want explanation, and yet its depths are fathomless. Every believer is God's heir—the heir of God. Could this have been, had there been no fall and no redemption? Children and heirs are more than was ever spoken of in Eden. Ay, listen yet again. Now we are one with God in Christ Jesus; for it is written concerning our Lord, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Close as the marriage-union is, yet Paul declared, when he spake of it, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Unfallen manhood was never declared to be one with the Son of God, and yet through the covenant of grace this is our position. We are joined by vital, real, conjugal union to Jesus Christ, the Son of the Highest, very God of very God; and this is an elevation so transcendent that I feel bowed down beneath the weight of glory which is revealed in us. The most glorious being next to God is man. A sinner most shameful once, but now in Christ a child accepted and honored! What can I say of this but "This is David's spoil"? This is what Jesus brought us. It came to us by no other way or method. Neither do we know in what way or method it could have been given to us, but by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is given to us through Jesus Christ, our elder Brother and our covenant Head, and unto him let the glory of it be ascribed world without end.

Another blessing which was not ours before the fall, and therefore never was lost, but comes to us as a surplusage, is *the fact that we are redeemed.* You sang just now that verse,

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

It is clear that you could never have known free grace and dying love if Jesus had not come to redeem you. Unfallen intelligent spirits will say in eternity, "Do you see those beings bowing nearest to the eternal throne? Do you see those well-beloved creatures? Who are they?" Spirits that have lived in other worlds will come crowding up to the great metropolis, and will say one to another, "Who are those courtiers—those that dwell nearest to God? Who are they?" And one spirit will say to another, "They are beings whom God not only made as he made us, but whom the eternal Son of God redeemed by blood." And one shining one will say to his fellow, "What is that? Tell me that strange story." Then will his companion delight to say, "They were saved because the Son of God took their nature, and in that nature died." "Wonderful! Wonderful!" his friend will answer. "How could it be? Was there suffering for them, and pain for them, and bloody sweat for them, and death for them on the part of the ever blessed Son of God?" The answer "It was even so," will be news full of astonishment even to the best instructed celestial mind. Spirits will look at us with wonder, and say, "What strange beings are these? Others are the work of God's hands, but these are the fruit of the travail of his soul. On others we see the marks of divine skill and power, but here we see the tokens of a divine sacrifice—a divine blood-shedding." Truly, we may say of our redemption, "This is David's spoil." That you and I should be such wonders as we must be in being redeemed beings, is indeed something given to us by Jesus over and above what Adam lost; and throughout eternity

all the sacred brotherhood of the redeemed by blood will be princes in the courts of God—the aristocracy of heaven, for "he hath made us kings and priests unto God."

We shall be creatures who have known sin, and have been recovered from its pollution. There will be no fear of our being exalted with pride or drawn away by ambition as the now-apostate angels were; for we shall constantly remember what sin did for us, and how grievous was our fault. We shall for ever remember the price at which we were redeemed; and we shall have ties upon us that will bind us to an undeviating loyalty to him who exalted us to so glorious a condition. It seems to me wonderful beyond expression: the more I consider, the more I am astonished. A spirit that has never fallen cannot be trusted in the same way as one that has fallen and has been delivered, and has been new-created, and blood-washed, and has been gifted with an abiding and eternal character. Such a being shall never fall, because for ever held by cords of love eternal, and bonds of gratitude infinitely strong, which will never let it waver in holy service. It is a work worthy of a God to create such beings as we shall be, since we shall be securely bound to voluntary holiness; and our wills, though always free, shall be immutably loyal to our Lord. As the twice-born, we shall be the noblest of God's works; we shall be the first-fruits of his creatures; we shall be accounted as the royal treasure of Jehovah. Then shall we sit with Christ upon his throne, and reign with him for ever. "This is David's spoil."

We receive blessings unknown to beings who have never fallen. I sometimes murmur to myself—and sweet music it has been as I have quietly murmured it—we are the

elect of God. Election is a privilege most high and precious, what can exceed it in delight? This also is David's spoil. We are also redeemed from among men: the redemption of the soul is precious. "This is David's spoil." We are covenanted ones, with whom God has entered into bonds of promise, swearing by an oath to keep his word: this, too, is David's spoil. Where had you ever heard of redemption, election, covenant, and such-like words, if it had not been for the blessed Christ of God, who hath redeemed us by his blood? Sing ye, then, who have received back your lost inheritance: and sing more sweetly still, ye who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies according as the Father hath chosen you in Christ Jesus. Sing ye aloud unto his holy name; and say of your special privileges, "This is David's spoil."

Again, to my mind it is a very blessed fact that you and I will partake of a privilege which would have been certainly unnecessary to Adam, and could not by Adam have been known, and that is, *the privilege of resurrection.* We shall die unless the Lord should suddenly appear. I would not have you, brothers and sisters, look upon the prospect of death with any sort of dread. I know that death is associated with pain; but nothing can be more absurd. There is no pain in death: pain belongs to life; death, even naturally, puts an end to pain. But death to the believer is undressing as his Lord undressed —putting off garments of which, I trow, we need not be so very fond, for they do fit us ill; and oftentimes, when our spirit is willing, it is hampered by these garments of clay, for the flesh is weak. Some look with intense delight to the prospect of the Saviour's coming, as a means of escape from death. I confess I have but slender

sympathy with them. If I might have my choice, I would prefer, of the two, to die. Let it be as the Lord wills; but there is a point of fellowship with Christ in death which they will miss who shall not sleep; and it seems to me to have some sweetness in it to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, even though he descend unto the sepulchre. "Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head?" That grave of our blessed Lord, if he had not meant us to enter it, would have been left an empty tenement when he came away; but when he came out of it, he left it furnished for those that should come after him. See there the grave-clothes folded up for us to use? The bed is prepared for our slumber.

The napkin is laid by itself, because it is not for the sleeper, but for those who have lost his company. Those who remain behind may dry their eyes with the napkin, but the grave-clothes are reserved for others who will occupy the royal bed-chamber. When great men removed in the olden time, their servants took away the arras or hangings of their chambers; but if those hangings remained, it was for the convenience of guests who were invited to occupy my lord's rooms. See, then, our Lord expects us to lie in his royal bed-chamber, for he has left the hangings behind him! To the retiring-room of the tomb we shall go in due time. And why should we be grieved to go? For we shall come forth again: we shall rise from the dead. "Thy brother shall rise again," was Mary's consolation from the Master's lips. It is yours. We are not going to a prison, but to a bath, wherein the body, like Esther, shall be purified to behold the King. It is our joy to be sure that "as the Lord our Saviour rose, so all his followers must." We do not

know much about the resurrection of the body, and therefore we will not attempt to describe it; but surely it will be a delightful thing to be able to dwell for ever in a body that has been in the grave, and has had fulfilled in it the sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," but which has been raised again by that same power which raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. We shall inhabit a body which shall no more see corruption, nor be subject to weakness, or pain, or decay, but shall be like the glorified person of our Lord. Oh, there is sweetness in the thought that we shall in this for ever have fellowship with our risen Lord! Children of the resurrection, dread not death! Your faces are turned to the sun. Press forward to the light eternal, and fear not to pass through the death-shadow: it is no more than a shadow. If you cannot leap over the grave, you can pass through it. It shall be your joy to rise when the morning breaketh, and to be satisfied; for you shall wake up in his likeness. As for the resurrection, "this is David's spoil," this is Christ's gift and boon. The resurrection from the dead is the peculiar glory of Christianity. The immortality of the soul had been taught and known before, for it is a truth which even reason itself teaches; but the resurrection of the body comes in as the last and crowning comfort of our spirits: and "this is David's spoil."

Let me not weary you. The topic might well interest us on several occasions; it is too large to be confined to one discourse. *Our singular relation to God, and yet to materialism*, is another rare gift of Jesus. God intended, by the salvation of man, and the lifting up of man into union with himself, to link together in one the lowest and the highest—his creation and himself. Shall

I make it very plain? These poor substances—earth, water, and the like—they seem far down in the scale. God makes a being that shall be, as an old Puritan used to say, half soul and half soil; even man, who is both spirit and dust of the earth. We find in him water, salts, acids, all sorts of substances combined to make up a body, and married to this is a soul, which is brother to the angels, and akin to Deity. Materialism is somewhat exalted in being connected with spirit at all. When spirit becomes connected with God, and refined materialism becomes connected with a purified spirit, by the resurrection from the dead, then shall be brought to pass the uplifting of clay, and its junction with the celestial. Do you not see how God, in the perfecting of his gracious purpose through the resurrection of the dead, causes his glory to be reflected even upon what we regard as poor material substances, gross and mean?

Try and get at my meaning again. Quakers, whom I greatly respect, get rid of the two ordinances, by denying that they are of perpetual obligation. They banish baptism: they put away the Lord's supper. I have sometimes wished that I were able to agree with them, because my whole spirit and tendency are towards the spiritual rather than the ritual; but if anything be plain to me in Scripture, it is that Jesus Christ did command us to be baptized in water in the Triune name, and that he bade his disciples remember him in the breaking of bread and in the drinking of the cup. The danger of men's making too much of outward forms was encountered for some wise purpose. It was, I think, because God would have us know that even the material, though it can only enter the outer court, is still to be sanctified unto himself. Therefore, water, bread, and wine, all material substances,

are used not only as symbols, but as tokens that all created things shall be ennobled and sanctified. Look ye, sirs, "Creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Through man's sin this outward world became blackened darkened, and degraded; but God intends, through man, to lift up the nethermost extremities of his creation into a greater nearness to himself than they ever could have reached by any other means. And this is how it comes about. We are taking up with us, as it were, the earth which makes a part of ourselves. We are drawing up with ourselves the earth in those simple symbols with which we worship God. We are ourselves lifted up as spirits, and we are soon to be lifted up as spirits enshrined in purified bodies, and thus we bring the whole creation of God into nearer contact with himself. Hence it is that we are called "kings and priests." What can the dead earth do in worship till there comes one who worships God as the world's priest? What can the fields and woods and hills say in the worship of God? They are dumb till a tongue attempts the holy task of uttering their praise. You and I are made of such stuff as the world around us, and yet we are the compeers of angels. We are brothers to the worm; and this body of ours is but a child of mother earth on which it lives. See then how mother earth worships God through us, and dull, dead matter finds life and song. Behold the mists and clouds become a steaming incense of praise to God through men like ourselves, who, because Christ was slain, have been made kings and priests unto God.

I wish you would, rather than listen to me, try and muse upon the wonderful position which redeemed men do now occupy, and will occupy for ever and ever. For

my own part, I would not change places with the angel Gabriel, nay, not if he gave me his swift wing to boot, for I believe that an infinitely greater honor belongs to the least of God's children than to the very highest of God's servants. To be a child of God—oh bliss!—there is no glory that can excel it. But all this is a special gift to our humanity through our Lord Jesus. "This is David's spoil."

Our manifestation of the full glory of God is another of the choice gifts which the pierced hands of Jesus alone bestow. Principalities and powers shall see in the mystical body of Christ more of God than in all the universe besides. They will study in the saints the eternal purposes of God, and see therein his love, his wisdom, his power, his justice, his mercy blended in an amazing way. They will admire for ever those whom God loves and delights in, those whom he keeps as the apple of his eye, those whom he rejoices over, and of whom he hath said that he will rest in his love, and he will rejoice over them with singing. Truly it hath not entered into the heart of man to guess at the glory of God in the saints, the exceeding glory of which shall be revealed in us through Jesus Christ our Lord. "This is David's spoil." Oh, come let us sing unto the Lord, let us magnify the name of Jesus Christ!

III. I close with the most practical part of my sermon: THAT WHICH WE WILLINGLY GIVE TO JESUS MAY BE CALLED HIS SPOIL. There is a spoil for Christ which every true-hearted follower of his votes to him enthusiastically. We have already seen that all things which we have are of Christ, and that there are certain special gifts which are peculiarly of Christ; and now, what shall be David's spoil from you and from me?

First, *our hearts are his alone for ever.*

> "Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
> Seal it from thy courts above."

Of every believing heart it may be said, "This is David's spoil." You and I must give ourselves to-morrow to earning our daily bread, and our thoughts must go, to a large extent, after earthly things in the common pursuits of every-day life. But our hearts, our hearts, are as fountains sealed for our Well-beloved. O mammon, thou shalt not have them! O pleasure, thou shalt not have them! These are David's spoil. Our hearts belong to Jesus only. "My son, give me thine heart," is an Old Testament command, but under the New Testament manifestation of love we fulfil it; "for the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Let it be so that our whole heart is the sole possession of Jesus! We will neither rend it, nor cast lots whose it shall be, for "this is David's spoil."

Now there is another property I should like King Jesus to have, and that is *our special gifts.* I know one, who, before his conversion, was wont to sing, and he often charmed the ears of men with the sweet music which he poured forth; but when he was converted he said, "Henceforth my tongue shall sing nothing but the praises of God." He devoted himself to proclaiming the gospel by his song, for he said, "This is David's spoil." Have you not some gift or other, dear friend, of which you could say, "Henceforth this shall be sacred to my bleeding Lord"? Some peculiar faculty? Some choice

piece of acquirement not generally possessed? Something in which you excel? I would that you had at least some little garden of flowers or herbs which you could so reserve that therein only Jesus should pluck the fruits. Say of the best gift you possess, "This is David's spoil." Is it not well to consecrate some part of the day, and say, "This hour is Christ's? I have my work to do, my business must be seen to; all is Christ's. But still I will reserve a special season, and wall it in, like a private garden, in which, with prayer, and praise, and meditation, I will commune with my Lord; or else in actual service I will honor his name." Say, "This is David's spoil." Come, dear heart, what do you mean to give him? Surely you have some natural faculty or acquired skill which you can lay at his feet.

Moreover, while our whole selves must be yielded to the Lord Jesus, there is one thing that must always be Christ's, and that is *our religious homage as a church.* Somebody says that the Queen is head of the church. God bless her; but she is no head of the church of Christ! The idea is blasphemous: headship "is David's spoil." Jesus Christ is Head over all things to his church, and nobody else can take that position. No one may dare to take the title of "head of the church" without a usurpation of our Lord's royal right. Certain teachers of the church claim authority over consciences, and assert that they are infallible. I have heard it said that they are supreme guides, but I do not believe it, because "This is David's spoil." We have one infallible Teacher, and that is Jesus Christ our Saviour. We yield obedience to his every word, and demand that others should do the same. Whatsoever *he* says to us by his Spirit in the Word of God is to us in-

fallible truth, and we cease to dispute when Jesus speaks, but no man else shall dictate doctrine to us, for "This is David's spoil." He must be sole Rabbi in the midst of his church. We call him Master and Lord, for so he is. I would have you keep your conscience for Christ alone. Take care that no book ever overlaps the Bible; that no creed ever contradicts the form of sound words contained in God's own Word; that no influence of minister or writer supplants the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Your soul's obedience and faith belong to Jesus only: "This is David's spoil."

Lastly, have you not something of *your own proper substance* that shall be David's spoil just now? That was a blessed act when the woman broke the most precious thing she had—her box of alabaster, and let the perfumed nard stream down the Saviour, anointing him for his burial. She felt that the precious perfume was "David's spoil." There was no waste; in fact, no other gift ever went so completely to its purpose without being taxed on the road, for Jesus had it all. Kindly did he observe the loving honor which she paid him. What if the ointment were sold, and given to the poor? Yet it could never be so economically used as when it was all devoted to him. I do think it so pleasant sometimes to give Jesus Christ distinctly a gift from yourself of somewhat that you will miss. It is good to give to the poor, but it has a daintier sweetness in it to do somewhat distinctly for him, for the spread of his own glory, and the making known of his own fame. "The poor ye have always with you": abound towards them in your charity whenever you will; but to your Lord at special seasons dedicate a choice gift, and say, "This is David's spoil." There was a poor woman once, whose little fortune could be carried be-

tween her finger and her thumb,—her fortune, I said, for it was all that she had. Two mites, I am told, was all it came to. She took it, it was her all, and she put it in the treasury; for this was "David's spoil." It belonged to the Lord her God, and she gave it cheerfully. I do not know whether since the days of the apostles anybody has ever given so much as that woman. I have not. Have you? She gave all her living. Not all her savings, but all her living. She had nothing left when she gave her farthing: she loved so much that she consecrated all her living. We sometimes sing—

> "Yet if I might make some reserve,
> And duty did not call,
> I love my God with zeal so great,
> That I would give him all."

But do we mean it? If not, why do we sing falsehoods? There was a man who, in the providence of God, had been enabled to lay by many thousands. He was a very rich and respected man. I have heard it said that he owned at least half a million; and at one collection, when he felt specially grateful and generous, he found a well-worn sixpence for the plate, for that was David's spoil! That was David's spoil! Out of all that he possessed, that sixpence was David's spoil! This was the measure of his gratitude! Judge by this how much he owed, or, at least, how much he desired to pay. Are there not many persons who, on that despicable scale, reward the Saviour for the travail of his soul? I shall not upbraid them. I shall not urge them to do more, lest I spoil the voluntariness of the large gifts they mean to bring. Let a hint suffice. For us, who are deep in the Redeemer's debt, who have had much forgiven, who every day are

bankrupt debtors to the measureless mercy of infinite love—for us, no paltriness will suffice. We must give something which, if it be not worthy of him, shall, at least, express the truth and warmth of the gratitude we feel. God help us to be often setting aside this, and that, and the other choice thing, and saying, "This is David's spoil, and it shall be a joy to my heart to give it!" We shall find much sweetness in buying our sweet-cane with money, and filling our Lord with the fat of our sacrifices. It is heaven for a true heart to give largely to Jesus.

God bless you, dear friends. May we come to the table of communion, and meet with our glorious David there, and feel his praises making music in our hearts! Amen.

VIII.

"THE WEDDING WAS FURNISHED WITH GUESTS."

May 6, 1888.

"The wedding was furnished with guests."—MATTHEW xxii. 10.

OUR discourse will follow the lines of the parable. A king desired to honor his son right royally. He loved his son well, for he deserved richly of him; and therefore, as the most fitting time had come, he resolved to honor him. His son was about to take to himself a spouse; should not his marriage, which is a great event in life, be celebrated with honor? The father determined to honor his son on the joyful occasion by inviting a large number of guests to a sumptuous banquet. Not by the infliction of pain, or the pressure of taxation, but by liberality and festivity, would the king honor the crown prince. It should be an extraordinary feast. Surely, it would be the simplest thing in the world to gather together a grateful company of guests. One would expect a competition for admission; everybody in the royal domain would eagerly ask for an invitation. But it fell out otherwise; there was a disloyal feeling abroad, and it now expressed itself; those who were bidden would not come, and means had to be used to secure the result spoken of in the text, so that "the wedding was furnished with guests."

The parable is plain: the great Father delights to honor Jesus, his Only-begotten Son. The Father loves the Son,

with whom he is one. The Son has deserved well at the Father's hands, for he has been "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It is the Father's aim in the work of grace to glorify his Son, who, as God and man in one nature, is the channel of grace to fallen men. He proposes to do this now that the Lord Jesus takes his church into marriage union with himself. The incarnate God calls a chosen company, the bride, the Lamb's wife, and celebrates thus early in the day this happy union by a wedding breakfast, to which he invites multitudes to come. It is a feast of mercy, grace, and peace; a marriage feast of delight and joy. The feast is for the glorifying of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very special manner. Can any of us measure the glory which comes to our Lord Jesus by his union with the church? Angels, and principalities, and powers, intelligences now existing, and all intelligences yet to be created, will wonderingly gaze upon the riches of his inheritance in the saints. What a spectacle is this! The Word made flesh that he might dwell among us! Immanuel, God with us, taking unto himself a company of chosen men, to be one with him for ever. In the union of Christ and his church all wisdom centres, all grace shines forth. "The excellency of our God" is to be seen in the salvation of the elect and the joining of them unto the Christ. Our glorious Second Adam was like the first Adam in the garden, for whom no helpmeet was found. Neither cherubim nor seraphim, angels nor spirits, could be fit companions for him. He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." He willed that his chosen church should stand to him in the same relation as Eve stood to Adam, to be the solace of his heart and the rest of his love. He chose men to be his companions, his friends, his joy, his crown.

One would have thought that every man hearing that manhood was thus to be honored by union with Godhead would flock towards the marriage-feast. It would have seemed certain that all would desire to know this heavenly mystery, and as soon as they knew it would press forward to be partakers in its bliss. Alas! this is not the case; and this morning my business is to tell you the story of how the purpose of divine love appeared in peril, but how, in the end, it is accomplished; and, according to the language of the text, "the wedding was furnished with guests."

I. Our first point is, that IT SEEMED AS IF NONE WOULD COME. The wedding-feast was prepared: oxen and fatlings were killed, all things were ready; but where were the guests?

Those first invited, and naturally expected, would not come. Previous notice had been given them of the festival, and afterwards a summons had been sent to say that the hour was come; but instead of joyfully responding, they would not come.

These were, first of all, the Jews, to whom the gospel had been given by the law and the prophets long beforehand. "He came unto his own, but his own received him not." Israel was not gathered: few out of the chosen nation recognized the Messiah. He came with a feast of mercy for them, but they would have none of it. He called and they refused.

To-day this same class will be found among the children of godly parents; dedicated from their birth, prayed for by loving piety, listening to the gospel from their childhood, and yet unsaved. We look for these to come to Jesus. We naturally hope that they will feast upon the provisions of grace, and like their parents will rejoice

in Christ Jesus; but, alas! how often it is the case they will not come! Some such are here this morning. We greatly grieve over you. You do not choose your father's God, nor accept your mother's Saviour. Ah me! if *you* will not come, who will? If you, who are taught concerning salvation by grace, yet refuse it, how can we wonder that the children of the godless and the profane reject our message? Who will come if you will not?

Dear hearers, some of you are not privileged with godly parents, but you have been for many years willing listeners to the Word of life, and yet you do not accept Christ Jesus as yours, nor accept the provisions of his grace. You do not joy with him in his union with his chosen, for you do not love him. How sad is this! Well may the dispirited preacher mourn, and fear in his heart that the great festival of love will prove a failure! If such as you are will not come, how will the wedding be furnished with guests?

The outlook grew worse still when *they came not, though they were reasoned with.* When they would not come, the king sent other servants to bring them to a better mind; and this was the form of his reasoning: "Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." No kinder argument could have been used: there was an appeal to all that was noble in them, and had they been worthy they would have come at once. I can well understand that the servants would repeat their lord's message with special eagerness, as they thought of his waiting in the palace, and watching for the guests. They would cry to those who hesitated, "You have waited long enough, come at once. The marriage cannot be delayed, why should *you* delay? Tarry no longer.

To-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts." Still they made light of it. When you have been invited to Jesus many a time; when tearful earnestness has pleaded with you, and yet men of God have had to return to their Master, saying "Who hath believed our report?" it becomes a sorrowful business, and our anxious fears cannot see how the wedding will be furnished with guests. This would have been an overwhelming surprise to us if Jesus had not declared of men in his own day, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." If they refused his pleadings we cannot wonder that they reject our sayings. Still it is a mournful fact, that "Many are called, but few chosen."

The case looks darker still when we notice that, *though reasoned with by new messengers, they did not come.* It is said, "He sent forth other servants." I tell you from my very soul that, if my Lord will only bring you to the banquet of his grace, I mind not who shall be the successful messenger. If you will not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life through what I have to say, may the Lord remove me, and send some one else, to whom he will give power by his grace to reach your hearts. I shall be glad to remain in this pulpit for years to come, but not at the cost of a single soul. If somebody else can preach to you more efficiently, if some one else can get at your hearts better than I have done, may the Lord allow me to retire for your good! Do you wish it? "He sent other servants." A preacher may be too rhetorical: let a plain-speaking person be tried. He may be too weighty: let another come with parable and anecdote. Alas! with some of you the thing wanted is not a new voice, but a new heart. You would listen no better to a new messenger than to the old one. After

so many good men and true have spoken; after Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas have all failed, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

If you look at *the various characters who would not come*, you will see more and more cause for sorrow. Of some we simply read that "*they would not come.*" They made no excuses or apologies, but curtly said they would not come. There was an end of the matter. Many dismiss the gospel at once; they are not to be reasoned with: they do not want it, and will not have it. a large class of the community have heard of the way of salvation, but they care nothing for it. It is not with them want of information, but want of inclination. They have neither mind nor will for heavenly things.

A second class made light of it. They were indifferent to royal honors and duties. They were taken up with the care of what they had in possession, and went their way, each man to his farm, saying, "I have worked hard to get my farm, and I cannot afford to let it lie idle." Another was taken up with the care of getting an estate, and went to his merchandise, saying, "I have nobody to keep my shop. I must mind the main chance. If you do not look alive, everybody will run over you. I must attend to my buying and my selling." The worldly-wise make up a very numerous class. The rich man cannot be religious, his position in society prevents; the poor man cannot mind the things of God, he is worn out by earning his daily bread. Thus they all make excuse. Lord, when so many are unwilling, and so many more are occupied with other things, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

A third class were violently opposed: they would not be bothered, they had no patience with religious cant;

they "took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." These are not so numerous as the others; but yet they are found among us. Sceptics, swearers, revilers of godliness, and "modern thought" men: these revile the cross, and are ferocious against the gospel. When we see these raging and raving, we are apt to ask very mournfully—How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The most dreadful thought of all remains: *some of the invited had already perished.* The king in his wrath sent his troops and slew the murderers of his messengers, and burned their city. While I have been preaching, many of my hearers have died. Where are they now? If they died without Christ they are now past hope. Ah me! they can never enter now, for the door is shut. If they died in their sins, they are in the outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you think of it, this is a dark prospect. Men are dying, dying without hope; and those who are yet alive are resolved to perish in like manner, for they are earnestly invited to the feast of love, but they refuse to come. How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The king tells us the real reason why they would not come: *they were not worthy.* Those who were invited specially, and about whom there was the greatest hope, had nothing in them to encourage that hope: they were not loyal, they were not kind-hearted, they were not honest, they were not worthy, else they would have come to do honor to the son of their king. Their not coming revealed the enmity of their hearts. It was a wretched way of showing their spite to the prince upon his wedding-day. It is horrible that men refuse Christ and heaven out of enmity to God. Rejectors of Christ

are unworthy of pardoning grace, unworthy of a dying Saviour, unworthy of those marriage bonds into which Jesus enters with believing hearts. They are not worthy in the gospel sense of worthiness, and of course they were far less worthy in a legal sense.

The most mournful spectacle in the world is a heart which refuses the mercy of God. Objection is sometimes made to the doctrine of *total* depravity. I do not know what adjective can be too strong to describe human depravity when I perceive that it refuses God under his loveliest aspect: God in the greatness of his love, God sparing not his own Son. If men turn away from God in anger I can understand it; if men turn aside from God in justice I can understand it; but when they so hate God that they will not even have his salvation, when they refuse pardon through the precious blood of Christ, when they will sooner be damned than reconciled to God, this shows that their heart is desperately wicked. The cross rejected is the clearest proof of the heart depraved. There I leave this mournful subject, and go a step further. Certainly it did seem as if the wedding would not be furnished with guests.

II. Secondly, IT WAS A MOURNFUL PROSPECT. Imagine that there had been no guests at the wedding feast: what then?

First, *it would have been greatly to the king's dishonor.* The crown prince is married, and nobody comes to the wedding! The feast is free, costly, plentiful, but nobody will come to it. What an insult? The banqueting-hall is lighted, and the minstrels are in their place, but no eyes or ears are charmed. Oxen and fatlings make the tables groan, but none are there to make the hall resound with shout and song. What a wretched spectacle!

Empty halls, unfurnished benches, meat untasted carried out to the dogs! History does not record a more deliberate and unmistakable insult. Let me translate the parable. If no souls are saved, if the great plan of redemption does not save, what a farce the whole business will be! What a dishonor to the name of the great God! Look at the supposition, that you may see the impossibility of it. Think for an instant of a defeated, disappointed, dishonored Jehovah! Can it be? And yet, if the wedding had not been furnished with guests, the king would have been disappointed and insulted in the tenderest point. If the chosen are not saved, if men are not brought to Christ, then the glorious name of the God of grace is dishonored. Do you think it can be so?

In the next place, suppose none had come to the wedding feast; then *the king's son would have been grieved.* His wedding, and nobody there! If it were your own, perhaps you could put up with it; for you do not stand in so public a position as the king's son, and you have not provided so vast a banquet. But the king's son! Only imagine that it is his wedding-day, and the servants are mustered in the hall, but not a single guest arrives. He has no one to congratulate him upon the happy day, no one to wish him well, no one to welcome the bride. Now, the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ: if he dies, and men do not believe in him; if he rises again, and men do not accept him; if he enters heaven as a prince and a Saviour, and yet no one receives repentance and remission, where is his honor? Where is his glory? Look at the dreadful supposition, and think whether it can be. I am sure, as you gaze upon it, you will say, "Impossible! A bleeding Saviour cannot die in vain. Our Christ could not in death have paid down the ransom price for

nothing. He could not have stood a substitute for men, and yet see men lost after all!"

If no guests had arrived, *how disappointed would the bride have been!* She, too, would have had to share in the failure of the day. Her bridal would not have been remembered with pleasure. She would have been happy in the bridegroom, but also unhappy because of the unkindness shown to him. In vain her rich apparel, and her costly ornaments, for there are no eyes to gaze upon them. If souls are not saved the church misses her greatest joy. When men believe in Jesus, how delighted we are! Our hearts leap for joy when men repent. But if sinners are not saved, if the preaching of the gospel is in vain, if they will not come to Christ, then are saints full of heaviness, and the church cries out in her anguish, "Hast thou forgotten to be gracious?"

Had none come to the marriage feast, *a store of provisions would have been wasted.* The king says, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed." See the bullocks roasting whole! See yonder fatted calf killed for the feast! Mark how the sheep are led to the slaughter! All this will remain untasted. Yonder dainty dishes, and flowing bowls, and luscious fruits will have none to enjoy them. It will be a wretched business indeed! I want you to look at the dreadful picture till it vanishes out of sight. Can it be that Jesus has made himself the heavenly bread, and none will feed on him, or at the best a very few? Can it be that he has provided a robe of righteousness, and nobody will wear it? Is heaven prepared, and will it remain half occupied? I do but suppose it for the moment, to make you see what a melancholy fact a failure in the scheme of mercy would be.

Would it not have meant, also, *the enemy's triumph?*

The king's foes would have heard of it, and laughed him to scorn. At a royal wedding he could not command guests! How they would scoff at his wasted provision! "Ha, ha! Ha, ha!" The story would have been told on every ale-bench. The sons of Belial would make rare mirth of it. The king, the prince, the bride would all have been ridiculed, because of a wedding in empty halls, a feast with phantom guests! I do not believe that God intends to let Satan triumph in this way. I cannot imagine that he will allow the powers of darkness thus to open their wicked mouths against him. If free-will refuses the gift of God, free-grace will come in and win the day. I have shown you already how free-will threatens to empty the banqueting-hall, and dishonor the king, the son, and the bride; and if the business had been left to the free will of man, this is the result which would have come of it: a God dishonored, and men preferring to die rather than accept life through Jesus Christ. Then it could never have been said that "the wedding was furnished with guests."

III. Let us go a step further and notice that in the parable THIS CATASTROPHE WAS GRACIOUSLY PREVENTED. "The wedding was furnished with guests."

We are very much in the same case to-day as the servants were in when the invited ones would not come. We preach and teach the gospel, but we have to complain that so many will not come to the banquet of grace. God gives us many souls, but not so many as we desire. We are eager for many more, and we begin to be afraid lest, after all; God should not be glorified as we wish that he should be. In the parable an unfurnished banquet was prevented, and so it will be in the reality. How was the calamity averted?

It was prevented, first, by *a fuller invitation.* At first the heralds only called those who had been previously bidden, a sort of aristocracy of hopeful persons. As these would not come, we read, "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." They went out, not to a select band, but to all whom they might find. Brethren, it is a grand thing when we get a clearer idea of what the gospel really is. The more evangelical our notions become, so that we are prepared to preach the gospel to every creature under heaven and to say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," the more we may hope for large success. If, by my preaching, I lead a man to look at himself, to see if there is anything in him which entitles him to believe, I practically hide the gospel from him. If I preach up character unduly, so that the man mainly inquires whether he has that character, I fix his eye upon himself; and this is not what I should aim at. If I go forth and gather together as many as I find, both good and bad, then their thoughts are on the banquet rather than on themselves. We want men to look to Jesus, and therefore we cry, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." When we get upon clear gospel lines, and keep there, we may expect to see the arm of the Lord revealed, and the wedding furnished with guests.

Again, *the invitation was now given more publicly.* They had simply gone to the houses of the invited guests, and said, "All things are ready: come." But now the servants go to the chief places of concourse; and they cry aloud, and spare not among the crowds of men. One has gone to the market-cross; another is preaching where four ways meet. Hark to the voice of one upon

the village green, and to the song of others as they traverse the back slum! You cannot now go along a street without hearing the news of the great wedding feast. Many will be brought in when many are eager to bring them in. God is pleased to own the means which he has himself ordained. The more constant and public the proclamation of the gospel becomes, the more numerously will men be saved through the Spirit of God. Then is the set time to favor Zion come. We are not to hide our lamp under a bushel. He that knows the gospel should speak it out as plainly as he can, and let his voice be as the silver trumpets of jubilee, that every ear may hear. It came to pass that the king's message was more widely made known, and thus the wedding was furnished with guests."

Another matter assisted: *the servants were now thoroughly aroused.* I am sure I should have felt dreadfully agitated to see all those provisions and none coming to eat them. Think of the halls decorated, the cooks working day and night, the big fires burning, bullocks roasting, the wines on the lees set abroach, and yet no guests. It would have worried me greatly, and you too. You would have said, "It cannot be, it must not be, we cannot bear it. The king, how sadly he must feel! The good prince, how bitter it is for him! The dear bride, what must be her sadness when this great insult is put upon her! Here, I must fetch in some guests, or die in the attempt." I am sure we should have travelled six ways at once if we could; we should have invited with a thousand mouths if possible. Getting hold of one man's coat, and of another man's sleeve, we should have compelled them to come in. This, also, is the Lord's way of blessing men. He arouses his own people, makes

them sorrowful for the sins of the times, and then they grow earnest and troubled, and so they lay themselves out to snatch men as brands from the burning. "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." The want of travailing causes the absence of conversion. When we begin to sigh, and cry, and mourn, because the ways of God are forsaken, then our earnestness moves the heart, both of God and man, and the guests come to the wedding.

Again, the calamity of a wedding without guests was prevented by *a certain secret power which went with the messengers.* We read that they "gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good." They did not merely invite them, but they gathered them in. Now, people are not to be gathered in in great numbers all of a sudden, and led to a feast by mere words. Words are but air. There is nothing in our words to make men come to Jesus, unless the Lord works by them. Yet the guests did come in shoals. An influence went with the words of those servants which drew the people together; they could not wish to stay away; they came gladly. Their wills were sweetly inclined, and they thronged the palace. Beloved, all the hope of our ministry lies in the Spirit of God operating upon the spirits of men. I want all the members of this church to feel this more deeply and practically than ever. Do not put trust in the preacher: if he happens to be away, do not think that God is tied to him. Look for a blessing upon the gospel itself whoever preaches it. If the Holy Ghost be with us we shall see thousands flocking to Jesus. No sinner will ever come to Christ apart from the quickening, enlightening, drawing, converting power of the Holy Ghost, supernaturally exercised upon the conscience and

heart. Let us believe this; and, next, let us be assured that the Spirit of God is with us, and let us then go forth with all boldness. To the street-corner, the cottage, the lodging-house, the wayside, let us go forth and publish abroad the invitation of the great King: "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage."

Thus you have seen the outward means by which the Holy Spirit brings men to Jesus, and the wedding is furnished with guests.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that IN THE END THE FEAST WAS A GLORIOUS SUCCESS. "The wedding was furnished with guests." Guests are a part of the furniture of a wedding feast. You may pile on your gold and silver plate, hang up your banners, load your tables, and sound your music; but if you have no guests the feast is a failure. It is our solemn conviction that the Lord our God has never failed yet, and that he never will fail. We believe that the Lord's eternal purpose will stand, and that he will do all his pleasure. We believe in no blind fate, but we trust in a predestination which is full of eyes, which accomplishes its purpose to the least jot and tittle. God's greatest work is redemption; will he fail in it? Salvation is the focus of his glory; shall this be frustrated? If God were to fail in connection with the cross, it would be a failure indeed; God would be dishonored, and his crown jewels cast into the mire. But it shall not be.

Turn to the parable, and we find *there were sufficient guests:* "the wedding was furnished with guests." There were as many guests as were necessary to the honor of the king, and his son, and his bride. Oh yes, in the gathering up and consummation of all things, the

wedding of the Lord Jesus will be amply furnished with guests: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." There will be no disappointment to Christ at the last great day. Satan may whisper disaster and disappointment to us at this hour, and for the moment it may seem as if the forces of darkness triumphed; but the end is not yet. The will of God, so full of grace and mercy, shall be accomplished, the preparations of grace shall be used, and the purpose of love fulfilled. As the wedding was furnished with guests so shall heaven be filled with "a number which no man can number."

The feast was more of a success than it would have been had there been no opposition. *The persons who came to the wedding were more grateful* than the first invited might have been if they had come. The richer sort had a good dinner every day. Those farmers could always kill a fat sheep; and those merchants could always buy a calf. "Thank you for nothing," they would have said to the king if they had accepted his invitation. But these poor beggars picked off the streets, they had not tasted meat for months. Their half-starved bodies welcomed the fatlings. How glad they were! One of them said to the other, "It's a long time since you and I sat down to such a joint as this," and the other answered, "I can hardly believe that I am really in a palace dining with a king. Why, yesterday I begged all the day, and only had twopence at night. Long live the king, say I, and blessings on the prince and his bride!" I warrant, they were thankful for such a feast. They said it was an ill wind that blew nobody any good: because their betters had refused to come, there was now room for them. When the Lord saves great sinners, such as you and me, he wins warm hearts for himself.

When the Lord saves unlikely ones, he gets unusual thankfulness. When he brings in the drunkard and the profane, the unclean and the hardened, and makes them pure and holy, and puts them among the children, what gratitude he gets! The Pharisee may ask Christ to a cold dinner, but it is the woman that was a sinner who will wash his feet with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. If some of you moralists get saved—and God grant you may!—you will never prize the precious blood so much as those do who are washed by it from the foulest stains.

The joy that day was much more expressed than it would have been had others come. Those ladies and gentlemen who were first invited, if they had come to the wedding, would have seated themselves there in a very stiff and proper manner. Dear me, what a fine thing propriety is! And yet, what a dead thing it is! One said to me the other day, "I have gone to my place of worship for many years, and nobody ever did speak to me that I know of, and nobody ever will; for we are all too respectable to know one another." You know the dignified style of self-satisfied people. Among such there is no cordiality, no freshness, no sweet naturalness. Did you ever attend a breakfast or a dinner of beggars? Did you ever see a company of very hungry people feeding to their heart's content? They make a merry clatter; they are not muzzled by propriety; they are glad at the sight of every dish. They look at the waiters as angels; and when the hurrahing comes to be done, you admire the strength of their lungs. The dull monotony of respectability knows no joy like that which comes to poverty when it feasts to the full at the table of bounty. The crown prince was happier that day among his poor

subjects than he would have been among the grandees and the fashionables. Those paupers, those laborers, those tramps, those hedge-birds, those were the fellows to make merry. To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much. Up in heaven they sing like the voice of many waters and like great thunder, because they have been cleansed from many sins and have partaken of great grace. Let the Pharisee and the moralist refuse the gospel; there are those about who, in accepting it, will do it greater honor than their dull souls could ever render to it. Thus the wedding was furnished with guests, who expressed their joy enthusiastically.

How the provisions were relished! It does one good to see a hungry man eat his food. To him every bitter thing is sweet. He does not turn over his food and cut off every little bit of gristle, as some of you do because of your delicate appetites. The true gospel hearer hearkens to the text—"Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." He does not act the critic, and cavil at this expression and that. He is too sharp-set to be particular about the dishes and the carving. We marvel sometimes at the capacity of hungry men; there is no end to it; and it is the same with spiritual as with natural hunger. I think I can tell what happened at that wedding: the bride nudged the bridegroom and said, "See these poor people eat! Is it not a pleasure to give one's oxen and fatlings where they are so much needed?" The bridegroom was as happy as he could be, for he was of a sympathizing heart, and he greatly rejoiced in the joy of the poor people around him. The king himself that day was gladdened as he saw what a gallant companyof trenchermen they were, and how there was no niggling, nor finding fault, but only un-

broken enjoyment and gratitude. The choicest kind of guests had been collected, if the object was to give joy. Ah dear friends! if you have a deep sense of sin, you will greatly love free grace and dying love. This is the lack of certain gentlemen who are always finding fault with the gospel: they never knew their own state by nature and by practice, and therefore they do not prize salvation. If they had felt a few lashes of the ten-thonged whip of the law upon their bare consciences, they would relish gospel forgiveness far more. He that has been in the prison of conviction prizes blood-bought freedom. He that has felt the chains of sin values the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. So I say, that inasmuch as these poor creatures were brought in from the streets, and their splendid appetites enjoyed the feast, the wedding festival was no failure, but all the greater success, because of the king's enemies. The wedding was furnished with guests—guests who enjoyed the abundance provided by the king.

Certainly, *the occasion became more famous* than it would otherwise have been. If the feast had gone on as usual it would have been only one among many such things; but now this royal banquet was the only one of its kind, unique, unparalleled. To gather in poor men off the streets, laboring men and idle men, bad men and good men, to the wedding of the crown prince—this was a new thing under the sun. Everybody talked of it. There were songs made about it, and these were sung in the king's honor where none honored kings before. In the kitchens, among the servants, this was a fine story to tell by the fireside, while Mary and Jane wished they had been there to see. In every lodging-house for years to come this would be the favorite story—the tale

of the poor man's prince, and the needy man's queen. On the exchange and in the market men talked of the brave bride and bridegroom who had defied the customs of fashion, and had done a deed so daring in its goodness. Was there ever such a thing heard of before? Here was a feast for men who never feasted before! Sensible men said, "And nothing could be better: they were feeding those that wanted feeding: they were giving good cheer to those who have little enough of it." Among the poor themselves the prince's name was very famous, while the portrait of the princess was nailed up over the mantelpiece. Children said to one another, "My father went to the wedding of the imperial prince." To many it seemed like a story out of the Arabian Nights. It did not read like a piece of common history at all, but like a fairy tale of the age of gold. Dear friends, when the Lord saved some of us by his grace, it was no common event. When he brought us great sinners to his feet, and washed us, and clothed us, and fed us, and made us his own, it was a wonder to be talked of for ever and ever. We will never leave off praising his name, throughout eternity. That which looked as though it would defame the king turned out to his honor, and "the wedding was furnished with guests."

One thing more: *the king's liberality was all the better seen.* If those who were first bidden had put in an appearance, they would have come arrayed in their own scarlet and fine linen. Some of the gentlemen would have bought a new suit on purpose. You may depend upon it, all the cunning women in the city would have been employed to get their ladyships ready for the banquet, that they might have honor in the court that day. Now these fine clothes would have been more for the glory of

those who came in them, than for the honor of the king. There was nothing of this among those who were gathered from the highways. They were in sorry gear. It was difficult, perhaps, in some cases, to tell which was the original stuff of their garments, so patched and mended were they. Anyhow, they were a ragged regiment; and what was the consequence? Why, then they must all be dressed in the prince's own livery, and all the glory of their apparel must be unto him. He said to his servants, "Go to my wardrobe. Bring forth changes of raiment." Every one that came in to the feast was invited to put on the king's wedding garments. When he came in to see the guests, it was a grand sight, for everybody was royally arrayed. The king's wedding robes were much better than his subjects' best suits. It was a grand sight to see so many all in one royal livery; every guest wearing the uniform of mercy. So is it with us poor sinners, saved by grace. If we had possessed any true righteousness of our own we should have worn it; but now we count our own righteousness but dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in him. His righteousness decorates all the saints: they could not be better arrayed. Thus is the feast made more glorious than it otherwise would have been, and the wedding is furnished with guests.

How I wish that I could gather in many this morning, both bad and good! I mean by good, those who are comparatively so as to their moral conduct. You are bidden to come to the wedding-feast of love. But even if you are bad, and obliged to own that you are so, I am equally anxious to gather you in to the feast. Do you ask me: What are we to do? What were these persons to do? To come just as they were, and freely re-

ceive what the king had freely provided. Sometimes at our treats for Sunday-school children every child is told to bring his own mug and plate; but it is not so with our great King. His banquet is too royal for that. You are to bring nothing. Still, everybody must go home and wash, must he not? No, the washing and the clothing shall all be done for you at the King's palace. Come as you are. "But what do you mean by coming?" We mean trusting; trust your soul with Jesus Christ, and he will save it. Trust him, and you shall know that he died in your room, place, and stead, so that, believing in him, you shall not perish, but have everlasting life. May the Holy Spirit lead you to believe in Jesus, that is, trust him.

I have told you the gospel, and the whole of it. Trust the crucified Saviour, and you shall live. Jesus says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Do not look within to see what is there, but look to Jesus hanging on the cross. A look at Christ crucified will save you. Look, dear girls, young as you are, look to Jesus now! Look, ye gray-headed men and women who have never looked before: look now! Strangers and foreigners, who have not heard this word before, there is life in a look at the Crucified One for you! Ye guiltiest of the guilty, and ye most amiable of the amiable, turn away from anything there is in yourselves, bad or good, and look to Jesus only. Receive from Jesus all he brings you—pardon, righteousness, sanctification redemption, himself. He that comes to a wedding feast has nothing to do but to eat and to drink. Give your mind up to this delightful exercise. Take the food which God provides you. You shall do good works afterwards,

for they will follow as a consequence of the strength which comes of receiving heavenly food through faith; but just now eat, drink, and be merry, as becomes a Prince's marriage. May the Father be pleased, his Son be honored, and his church be comforted through you! Amen and Amen.

IX.

WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT?

May 20, 1888.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—MATTHEW xxii. 11-13.

Two Sabbath mornings ago I preached from this parable, and I trust many were encouraged by it; but I noticed among inquirers who came to see me afterwards, a desire to know about the wedding garment; for they feared lest, in coming to join the church, they should come like the man of whom I shall now speak. Many true hearts are extremely sensitive to the impression of fear, and they seem to be on the watch for reasons for anxiety. I do not condemn them; on the contrary, I wish there were more of such holy tremblers. It is much better to be afraid of being wrong than to be indifferent as to what you are. I perceive among the very best of the saints a considerable number who are deeply anxious as to their state before God. Those who will one day be cast out of the wedding feast are feeding themselves without fear, while those who have the most right to enjoy the banquet are full of gracious anxiety. Solomon says, "Happy is the man that

feareth alway": he will cling closely to his God, and that will make him happy; he will not run risks like the presumptuous, and so he will be happy. Holy fear spreads few banquets, but it takes care that when there is a feast we go to it in a wedding garment.

My chief object this morning will be to allay the fears of gracious ones. If they understand what the wedding garment really is, they will probably discover that they are wearing it; and, if not, they will know in whose wardrobe that garment of joy is to be found, and they will gladly ask to be arrayed therein. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, give a wedding joy this morning to each wedding guest, by causing him to see for certain that he is clothed in the wedding robe.

Immediately after our text, we find these solemn words: "Many are called, but few are chosen." This is a conclusion drawn from the whole parable, in which we see processes at work which separate the chosen few from the many who are called. A distinction was made by the summoning of the invited guests. The simple delivery of the invitation set a difference between the loyal and the rebellious—a distinction most marked and decisive. So it is in the preaching of the gospel: we preach it to every creature within our reach. Lovingly, tenderly, earnestly; not so well as we would, but still with all our heart we call men to the royal feast of grace; and straightway the very invitation begins to gather out the precious from the vile. Pure gospel preaching is very discriminating. You can tell Cain from Abel as soon as the sacrifice is the subject. Preach salvation by grace, and you find that some will not have it at any price, others postpone all consideration of it, and a third party raise questions without end. Still do men make

light of it, and go their way to their farms and to their merchandise. Thus, dear friends, every Sabbath day, without our attempting to sit in judgment on men, the gospel is in itself a refining fire. In the gospel the Son of David has a throne of judgment as well as of mercy. When men will not have Christ and his grace, the Word preached by his humble servant drives them away, and they go with the chaff. But the work of discrimination is not finished after the gospel has been heard and men have been brought into the church. Alas! even in the church division has to be made; indeed, it is there that this is most fully carried out. "His fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor." If he uses a scourge nowhere else, he will be sure to use it in his own temple. Among the sheep there are goats; among the virgins there are foolish ones; and among the guests at the wedding feast there are those who have not on the wedding garment. Until we come to heaven itself we shall always discover necessity for the work of self-examination. Even in the apostolic college, Judas carried on his knavery, as if to warn us that no rank in service, no honor among brethren, no length of experience can screen us from the necessity of saying, "Lord, is it I?" when his warning voice saith, "One of you shall betray me." In our text we see a man who has hearkened to the invitation and has come into the feast, and thus has passed the first test; and yet he is unable to abide the second; he has been received by the servants, but he cannot deceive their master. The king detects him as a spot in the feast, and he is cast out from the palace of mercy into the outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. May none of us be of this sort.

I shall endeavor to answer four questions naturally arising out of the parable. First, *What is meant by the king's coming in?*—"when the king came in to see the guests"; secondly, *What is the wedding garment?* thirdly, *Who is he that hath it not?* and fourthly, *Why did he stand speechless* when he was asked, "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?"

I. May the Holy Spirit help us while we consider, first, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE KING'S COMING IN.

"The king came in to see the guests." They were all reclining at the tables, for "the wedding was furnished with guests." They gathered while the sun was up, but darkness covered the world outside when "the king came in to see the guests." They had feasted, and now the king came to honor the assembly.

It was the crown and the culmination of the feast. No matter how dainty the viands, nor how bright the hall, the feast has not reached its height till his majesty appears in gracious condescension. It is so with us, beloved, in reference to our greater King. When we are gathered in this house, which has often proved to us a palace of delights, we never reach the height of our desire till the Lord manifests himself to us. You delight to hear the preacher, and to join in the song, and to say Amen to the prayer, but these are not all. Your heart and your flesh cry out for God, for the living God; you look to behold the King in his beauty. When the glorious Father reveals himself in Christ Jesus, then the Sabbath is a high day, for our prayer is answered, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." Our glorious King is not always equally manifest in our solemn assemblies. Doubtless because of our sins he hideth himself. In truth he is always with us; for the feast is his, and the hall is

his, and every guest is brought in by his grace, and every dish on the table is placed there by his love; but yet there are times when he is specially seen among his people. Then our communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ, is sweet indeed.

These are seasons of gracious visitation: times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When the King comes into the assembly, the preaching of the word is in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power. Then the day of Pentecost has fully come: the Spirit is abundantly outpoured, souls are saved, saints are edified, and Christ is glorified. The spiritual soon detect the divine presence, and the shout of a King is heard in the camp. When I think of it, my heart cries out with Isaiah, "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence!" The presence of our God brings with it heavenly happiness, solemn content, and overflowing joy. Well does Dr. Watts sing:—

"The King himself comes near,
And feasts his saints to-day;
Here we may sit and see him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.

"One day amidst the place
Where my dear God hath been
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."

Beloved friends, you know better than I can tell you when the King is near, and you know sorrowfully when he is not in the assembly. Alas, from how many congregations is he absent, and that absence unmourned! When the Lord is gone we spread our sails, but there is no wind: we bring the sacrifice, but there is no fire. The

wedding would have been a failure without guests; but what would the feast have been if the host had refused to come in and see the guests? But the King came in in due time. Ay, came in among that crowd of wayfarers gathered from the highways at a moment's notice, and his presence crowned the festival with honor and rapture.

This coming in to see the guests indicates *a glorious revelation of himself.* When the King saw the guests, the guests saw *him;* but, inasmuch as his sight of them was the more important sight of the two, the chief thing is mentioned while the minor matter is implied. Do we know what it is to see God? This is the special privilege of the pure in heart. When the Lord's way is in the sanctuary, then his sanctified ones behold him. Spiritual eyes have looked to Jesus by faith, and he saith, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Have you never been like John in Patmos, ready to swoon away because of the revelation of the Father in Christ? When Jesus has been set forth evidently crucified among us, we have in him beheld the face of the great King, and our hearts have leaped for joy, so that we have been ready to leap into heaven itself if the word had been given. When Augustine read those words, "Thou canst not see my face and live," he was bold enough to answer, "Let me die to see thy face."

Blessed vision!

> "Lord, let me see thy beauteous face!
> It yields a heaven below;
> And angels round the throne will say,
> 'Tis all the heaven they know."

The King delights to see his guests, and his guests de-

light to see him. Then is our worship full of bliss, and no place out of heaven is so like to heaven as the place of our assemblies. We read in the Gospel of John: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;" and well they might be. Then are we glad also when we distinctly discern him as our Lord and our God. My own soul knows this joy unspeakable, but because it is unspeakable, I say no more.

For the King to come in and see the guests includes *a manifestation of special favor.* He comes in, not to judge the guests, but to look upon them. You that were here last Thursday might will remember my text: "Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." The Lord is accustomed to look with favor upon those who love his name, for he is pleased with them. O brothers and sisters, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; when the Father lifts upon us the light of his countenance, then our summer weather is come. Can anything be compared with the favor of God? The smiles of kings, the friendships of emperors—do not mention them in the same day. Some of you know that the Lord loves you; yea, that he loved you from before the foundation of the world, and he will love you when the world has ceased to be. Oh that the King would come here this morning in that sense, and look into all your faces, and give you all the full assurance that you are in his heart, and shall be there to all eternity! Oh that this whole church may be a living temple in which the Lord shall delight to dwell; may every stone of it be brilliant with the reflected light of his favor; may all our testimonies and labors be acceptable unto him, and may he be very gracious at the voice of our cry! O

Jehovah, manifest thyself here as thou didst between the cherubim? For thy sake we have borne reproach; Lord, be our glory! We have held fast thy truth; we beseech thee, let the light of thy countenance encourage us!

But here is the solemn point to which I call your attention: this visitation brings with it *a time of discovery and searching of heart.* When the king comes in to see the guests, the light grows stronger, and hidden things are revealed; for all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. When the Lord visits his church, his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem; then the man without a wedding garment is winked at no longer. You can go on sleeping as a church when God is away, and no members will fall off; for those who know not the Lord will come in and go out among you as aforetime. The dead will remain quiet till the Lord sounds the trumpet of resurrection: mere professors will not know that they are making a false profession, but will remain at ease in our solemn feasts. But when the King comes in all things are changed. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope." You cannot receive abundant spiritual life into the church without the discernment of the unworthy, and the expulsion of the spiritually dead. One goes away because he is offended at the doctrine, another is grieved at the heart-searching experience, and a third feels himself too sternly rebuked as to his life. Thus the Lord's visitation of grace becomes an assize of judgment, and the finger of the Lord writes upon the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." If the Lord our God were to come into his church to-day

there would be an awful shrinkage among the number of his guests; a panic would seize the assembly, and the door would be blocked with men hastening to escape his eye.

Look how the king's discernment is recorded in the text. One man only had refused to put on a wedding garment; but the king at once fixed his eye upon him. The Saviour, by a kind of heavenly charity, mentions only one intruder, but I fear we must regard the one as a type of many. If the King should come in at the time of our communion, I am afraid he would detect more than one. Still, if there were but one, he would concentrate his gaze upon that one, and speak to him by himself. If you are the only person who has dared to enter the church knowing that you are not converted, the King will spy you out. If you make a profession of religion out of bravado, and keep it up by sheer deceit, you may hide yourself away among your family connections, or think that your respectability will screen you; but you are mistaken. You have to deal with one whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and he will so unmask you that you will not have a word to say in your own defence. This is a solemn matter. It will not make the true-hearted wish the King to stay away, but those who are wilful deceivers may well tremble. The King does come to this church. He is specially present in the midst of this people, and the consequence is that his judgment is strict with us. I have seen the rod of his discipline here in a very striking manner. I have seen the fair professor wither in the heat of love, and the rootless Christian dried up in the noontide of grace. He might have gone on very well in any other church, but he has not been able to abide the brandished sword of the Spirit, and its

dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow. He has not been able to sit it out, but has been obliged to go away and find an easier rest. Just in proportion as we really have the King in the midst of us making glad the saints, we shall have the King in the midst of us discerning the false and casting them out, first into the outer darkness of the world, which lieth in the wicked one, and at last into the outer darkness of weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Still, be the result what it may, our prayer this morning is, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us."

II. Now I would answer the second question: WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT? You are probably aware that this has been a point greatly disputed among theologians. Is the wedding garment justification, or sanctification, or what? I am not going to be theological and bring doctrinal matters to the text; but I shall read the parable as it stands, and interpret its details by its general run. It is called a "*wedding* garment"—a garment suitable for a marriage feast. Let us translate the figure, rather than attempt to rivet a doctrine to it. What does a wedding garment mean? What is that which we must have in connection with our Lord's marriage or be cast out for ever?

I think I may say plainly that it must signify *a distinguishing mark of grace*. Everybody does not wear a wedding garment: he who wears it has put it on because he is a wedding guest. You know the wedding guest at once by his attire. He dresses in a way which would be considered singular if he were so arrayed every day. Your steady citizen indulges in a white waistcoat on the nuptial occasion, but he never dreams of going down to his office in the city in such gear. True members of the

church of God wear a distinguishing mark. If you are not different from other people, you have no right in the church of God. If a servant can live with you for years and never discover your love to God, I should think there is none to discover. If you are just the same as those you lived with in your former days, if you have undergone no change, and are like the rest of men, you have not the distinguishing mark which sets forth your right to be in the church of God. There ought to be a something about us which sets us apart—a something which can be seen and understood by common people, even as a wedding garment could be seen, and its meaning at once perceived. Your religion must not require a microscope to perceive it, nor should it be so indistinct that few can discover any meaning in it. It should be as visible as the white garment which was worn by Easterns at a marriage. Is it so?

I may boldly add here that the wedding garment was a distinguishing mark of grace; for as these people were fetched in from the highways they could not have provided themselves with wedding garments. It is the custom in the East for a king to provide robes for his guests; therefore this wedding garment was a mark of grace, freely given and received. Is there, then, a something about you which the Lord in love has given you? Do you differ from others, not in natural attainments, but in spiritual grace? Does the difference mainly lie in what God himself has done for you? That is the question involved in the symbol of the wedding garment. Do you differ from what you used to be? Do you differ from what you were years ago? Do you differ from those with whom you used to associate, so that you seek other company and turn aside from those

who once were charming fellows to you? If so, you have on the wedding garment. It is a distinguishing mark. I do not mean to put this in a way that would grieve anybody here unless they ought to be grieved; but if they ought to be grieved, then we would have them cry to God for renewal by his grace. May the Lord make you to wear his livery! May he give you the spot of his children, and cause you no longer to be of the world! A distinguishing mark is plainly the first meaning of the wedding garment.

In the next place, it was *a symbol of respect for the king.* To be fit for his company, the dress must be special. The absence of such a dress was, in the case before us, the badge of irreverence and disloyalty. This man said to himself: "I will feed at the feast without acknowledging its intent. Whoever stops me, I will push my way in, and I shall sit there in my every-day garments, to let the king know that I do not respect him in the least, and will not wear the robes he provides." It is as if you had lost a son, and some wretched man should say, "I will attend the funeral in a wedding suit. I shall thus wound the feelings of the mourners, and show my contempt for the whole affair." What an insult it would be! To turn the picture. Suppose you were being married, and somebody forced his way into the wedding dressed in mourning, with crape upon his hat, and black kid gloves upon his hands. What a wanton insult! If such impudence were met with a horse-whip, who would be surprised? Now, this man acted in that fashion: he had no respect for the king: he showed his traitorous nature in the worst possible manner, spiting the king in his own halls upon a tender occasion. Dear friends, I trust that you can truly say, "I have on the wedding

garment of reverence for the King. I do not despise the Lord God; but I bow before him in true worship. I would come into his church, not to dishonor him, but to give glory to his name." The wedding garment was a token of respect to him who had provided the feast and presided over it: judge you this day whether you have on the wedding garment, by inquiring whether you honor and reverence the Lord God, and labor to be obedient to him in all things.

The wedding garment was, moreover, *a token of honor for the prince.* Those who put on the wedding garment did as good as say, "We join in the joy of the prince, and come hither to-day to show our attachment to him, and to wish him joy of his bride." My hearers, do you feel a love to the Lord Jesus Christ? Many do not. I grieve to say we have a race of men sprung up nowadays who call themselves Christians, who pour contempt upon his precious blood, and ridicule the substitutionary sacrifice. Dreadful assertion! but it is a matter of fact. The name of Jesus, why, it is to our lives what the sun is to the sky, what the rivers are to the plains. Nothing makes us so glad as thoughts of Jesus. I am sure when I hear a sermon about Christ, my Master, my very heart grows warm within me. Is it so with you? Well, then, you have on the wedding garment; that is to say, you do truly, though it be but in a simple way, pay homage to the Prince of Peace; you love the name and person of Jesus, and you come into his church because you do so.

The wedding garment also signified *a confession of sympathy with the great occasion.* Every man who ate of the fatlings, every man who drank of the wines, every man who gave his presence, was a helper in the honors

of that wedding feast, save only this one intruder, who would not even pretend to join in the joy, for he refused the simple act of putting on a robe fit for the feast. Dear friend, do you feel sympathy with the Lord's purposes of grace? Do you rejoice that Jesus finds a bride among our race? Do you bless God for the covenant of grace, which includes incarnation, redemption, and sanctification? Do you bless the name of the incarnate God for taking into everlasting union with himself a people prepared of the Lord? Well, then, you are in sympathy with the marriage of the Lamb, and you have a right to be present at the feast. You evidently wear the wedding garment which denotes your joy in Christ, your interest in his church, your part and lot in the joyous work of his salvation.

The wedding garment means, in a word, *conformity to the requirements of the occasion.* It was a wedding, and the guests must put on a suitable dress. This man refused to put it on. He was proud, and would not wear the gift of grace; he was self-willed, and must needs be singular, and show his independence of mind. The regulation was by no means irksome, and to the rest of the guests the commandment was not grievous; but this man would have his own way in defiance of the lord of the feast. What could come of such folly? Now, beloved, one of the requirements of the feast is, that you with your heart believe on the Lord Jesus, and that you take his righteousness to be your righteousness. Do you refuse this? If you will not accept the Lord Jesus as your substitute, bearing your sins in his own body on the tree, you have not the wedding garment. Another requirement is that you should repent of sin and forsake it; and that you should follow after holiness, and endeavor

to copy the example of the Lord Jesus. You are to possess, as the work of divine grace, a godly and upright character. Have you such a character? Even though you are not perfect, yet, inasmuch as you follow after righteousness, you have the wedding garment. You say that you are a Christian; do you live like a Christian? Are you in a position and condition which agree with the gospel feast? If so, you have on the wedding garment.

Those who came unto the feast were, when they came, both bad and good; so that the wedding garment does not relate to their past character, but relates to something with which they were invested when they came to the banquet. The putting on of a wedding robe cannot refer to an elaborate ceremony, or a feat of the intellect, or to a deep experience of the heart; and yet it involved joining in the wedding, or not joining in it. It involved reverence for the king, and homage to the prince, and sympathy with the whole matter. Look well to yourselves, and see whether you truly yield yourselves to the Lord, and agree with him in the whole matter.

III. Thirdly, WHO IS THE MAN THAT HAS NOT ON THE WEDDING GARMENT?

I should say, first, *he is the man who rejects God's revealed gospel that he may follow his own thought and his own wisdom.* He says that he is loyal to Christ, and he expects all his fellow guests to be firm friends with him, for is he not in the banquet as much as they are? But he does not mean by loyalty what they mean by it. He is among believers, but he is not truly of them. He talks about atonement; he does not mean substitution. He talks about the divinity of Christ; he does not mean the Godhead of Christ. He talks about justification by faith; but he does not mean the old-fashioned doctrine.

He speaks of regeneration, but means evolution. He girds himself with the garment of philosophy, but he refuses the robe of revelation, for the cut of it is too old-fashioned for him. He is no more a wedding guest than he is a merry-andrew; perhaps, not so much so. He wears raiment in which the robe of righteousness and the garments of gladness are not to be seen. The looms of free grace and dying love have never woven him a wedding dress. His robe is not of God's provision; it is from his own wardrobe. He glories in his own culture, and not in the revelation of God, nor yet in the work of divine grace upon the heart. He is in the church, but he is not in Christ. He has a name to live, but he is dead.

The next person who has not on the wedding garment is *the man who refuses the righteousness of God* because he has a righteousness of his own. He thinks his work-day dress good enough for Christ's own wedding. What does he want with imputed righteousness? He scouts it as immoral. He who is himself immoral! What does he want with the precious blood of Jesus? He does not need to be washed from crimson stains. He writes a paper against the sensuousness of those persons who sing—

> "There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

His own righteousness, though it be of the law, and such as Paul rejected, he esteems so highly that he counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing! Ah me, the insolence of self-righteousness! Its pride is the very chief of sins, for it slights the righteousness of God. Practically, the self-righteous man does not see any wedding in the gospel system; he does see anything in the gospel to

make him glad, nothing for him to sing about, nothing to make him shout for joy of heart. He will not praise the Prince. Not he! He is under the law, and he is content to be a slave; he is trying to save himself by his own works, and law knows no holidays. He is not a wedding guest, but a mere drudge.

Another sort of person *has profession without feeling.* If he were outside of the church his conscience might trouble him: he has come inside of it, and now he says to himself, "It is all right." He does not care to watch his feelings; he never had any: he would rather not have any. To the power of the Word he is a stranger, though he knows the letter of it. As to repentance, and the burden of sin, he never knew them, and does not want to know them. He thinks Mr. Bunyan must have been superstitious or morbid when he wrote "Grace Abounding." Joy in the Lord is equally a thing unknown to him, for he hates all excitement. He has no solemn depressions and no raptures, for he has no spiritual life. As he has no holy feeling, so he has no holy action: he is a Christian, he says; but having put up the sign-board, he drives no trade. His religion operates far more upon his boots and his hat than it does upon his heart; that is to say, he comes out respectably dressed on a Sunday, but his religion never affects his conduct. Nobody can find much fault with him, except that he is as dead as a door nail. He commits no gross sin, he certainly performs no brilliant deeds of piety. Spiritually he is a very well washed corpse—that is all.

We have others who are in the church, who *think that what they have done themselves, or what nature has done for them, is quite enough.* They do not seek anything supernatural. They do not want any wedding garment more

than their every-day coats. They are quite reputable in appearance even now, and with a little touching up they will be good enough without the new birth, and without the Holy Spirit. Alas, my hearers! all that nature can ever do for you will leave you on the wrong side of heaven. You may cultivate nature to its utmost, it will never bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. "Ye must be born again." If you have not come into living contact with a living Saviour by the work of the Holy Ghost you may be in the Church, but you are not in Christ, and have not on the wedding garment.

Why, some dare to come into the church who *have not even common morality.* It is shocking we should have to say it, but nowadays, we meet with those who call themselves Christians who can drink upon the sly, who can commit uncleanness with their bodies, who can be dishonest in their trading, who can be liars, who can hate their own flesh and blood and be at enmity with their brethren, and yet dare to come to the communion table. In the highlands of Scotland it was at one time difficult to get Christian people to come to the Lord's Table, for they so trembled under a sense of their unworthiness. We do not want to push this too far, but that is a great deal better than that unholy daring, which is to be found in the minds of so many who serve Christ and Belial. God save his church from degradation! Unholy professors have not on a wedding garment: their outward robes by no means befit the King's feast; but they are a dishonor to him.

I do not see how that man can be said to have on a wedding garment *who takes no interest in the work of the church.* You see when a man put on the wedding garment, he did as good as say, "I am interested in the

wedding. I wish God's blessing to the bride and bridegroom." But many come in now to the King's feast who do not care a snap of the finger for the church of God, nor for Christ either. They come in because a sort of selfishness makes them anxious to be saved; but as to the bride, the Lamb's wife, they do not care whether she starves or flourishes. Sad and wretched business this! If members of the church only can distribute tracts or attend meetings for prayer—if they are doing this, and show an interest thus in the wedding—they have on the wedding garment. But if all they do is simply to hear, either to criticise or to enjoy, but never work for Christ, nor pray for Christ, they have no sympathy in the wedding feast, and therefore they have not on a wedding garment.

IV. To close, WHY WAS THIS MAN SPEECHLESS? We do not often meet with people who have no excuse. Excuse-making is the easiest trade out. A man can make an excuse out of nothing at all, or out of what is less than nothing, out of a direct lie. But here was a man who could not speak. Why was that?

Well, I think, first, *the affront was too bare-faced.* "How camest thou in hither?" If he did not like the king he could have kept outside. There was no need why he should come in at all, and there display his malice. If any of you are resolved to be lost, you need not add to your eternal ruin by making a profession of religion, for hypocrisy is a superfluity of naughtiness. But this man wilfully refused the wedding garment. Now, those dear souls I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon do not wilfully refuse the Lord's grace: I am sure they do not. Oh no, they are afraid they are not right, but they do not wish to be wrong. Such are not among those whom this parable condemns.

Next, *the affront was so audacious.* "How camest thou in hither?" said the king. He must have pushed by the deacons at the door. The fellow would come in. When the king said, "Bind him hand and foot," I think it was because he had used hand and foot to get in. He would get in; he said, "I will get in. I will defy the king to his face, and sit in among his guests without a wedding garment." You, dear friend, do not wish to do that: I am sure it is the last thing you would do. Why we have to persuade you to come in at all; for you are so tenderly jealous lest you should be mistaken. Do not let this parable condemn you.

But why was this man speechless? I answer once more, *because it was the king himself who spoke to him.* Ah! if I speak to you, what am I but flesh and blood? You do not mind me! But if the King himself were here to-day, and he said to any one of you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" the tone of his voice, the glory of his presence, would flash in upon your hearts, you would be obliged to feel it, and you could not invent an answer. If you do not love him, if you have no reverence for him, no sympathy with his Son, you will be speechless before his bar.

Lastly, the reason why he was speechless was because, even if he could have spoken and been free from terror, *there was nothing to be said.* He could not cry, "Lord, I did not know it." He saw all the rest with wedding garments on. He could not say, "Lord, I could not get a wedding garment": each one had received a garment gratis, and he might have received the same. He could not say, "Lord, I was pushed in here by somebody else." No, he had willingly chosen to come, and to defy

the rule The guests had all looked at him: some had edged a little way off from him. Some had tenderly said, "Brother, will you not put on the wedding garment?" He answered, "No." "Will you not go out before the king comes in?" "Why," he said, "I came on purpose to defy him. I mean to keep my place." I do not wonder that the king said, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Our Lord Jesus Christ says very strong things about the future of the wicked. I have been accused of representing the state of the lost in too horrible a manner. I have never gone beyond the dreadful descriptions given by our Lord himself. Do not risk your eternal future. Come to the church of God and join it, but do not join it unless you love the Lord. Do not come to the gospel feast unless you reverence the King; unless you love the Prince; unless you are in sympathy with the great work of grace which is pictured as a wedding feast. If you have sympathy with the wedding, love to the bridegroom, and delight in the bride, then come and welcome; for you have the wedding garment. I am thinking just now of all those other hundreds of people at the wedding, all of them clothed with the wedding garment. What joy they felt! Many had been bad, and all had been poor: but they all had the wedding garment, and not one of them was cast out. If you will but put your trust in Jesus, and so honor the Son; and rest in the love of the Father, and so honor the King, it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." God bless you for Jesus sake! Amen.

X.

"LET HIM DELIVER HIM NOW."

June 17, 1888.

"He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God."—MATTHEW xxvii. 43.

THESE words are a fulfilment of the prophecy contained in the twenty-second Psalm. Read from the seventh verse—"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Thus to the letter doth our Lord answer to the ancient prophecy.

It is very painful to the heart to picture our blessed Master in his death-agonies, surrounded by a ribald multitude, who watched him and mocked him, made sport of his prayer and insulted his faith. Nothing was sacred to them; they invaded the Holy of holies of his confidence in God, and taunted him concerning that faith in Jehovah which they were compelled to admit. See, dear friends, what an evil thing is sin, since the Sin-bearer suffers so bitterly to make atonement for it! See, also, the shame of sin, since even the Prince of Glory, when bearing the consequences of it, is covered with contempt! Behold, also, how he loved us! For our sake he "endured the cross, despising the shame." He loved us so much that even scorn of the most cruel sort he deigned

to bear, that he might take away our shame and enable us to look up unto God.

Beloved, the treatment of our Lord Jesus Christ by men is the clearest proof of total depravity which can possibly be required or discovered. Those must be stony hearts indeed which can laugh at a dying Saviour, and mock even at his faith in God! Compassion would seem to have deserted humanity, while malice sat supreme on the throne. Painful as the picture is, it will do you good to paint it. You will need neither canvas, nor brush, nor palette, nor colors. Let your thoughts draw the outline, and your love fill in the detail; I shall not complain if imagination heightens the coloring. The Son of God, whom angels adore with veiled faces, is pointed at with scornful fingers by men who thrust out the tongue and mockingly exclaim, "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

While thus we see our Lord in his sorrow and his shame as our substitute, we must not forget that he also is there as our representative. That which appears in many a psalm to relate to David is found in the Gospels to refer to Jesus, our Lord. Often and often the student of the psalms will say to himself, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" He will have to disentangle the threads sometimes, and mark off that which belongs to David and that which relates to the Son of God; and frequently he will not be able to disentangle the threads at all, because they are one, and may relate both to David, and to David's Lord. This is meant to show us that the life of Christ is an epitome of the life of his people. He not only suffers for us as our substitute, but he suffers before us as our pattern. In him we see what we have in our

measure to endure. "As he is, so are we also in this world." We also must be crucified to the world, and we may look for somewhat of those tests of faith and taunts of derision which go with such a crucifixion. "Marvel not if the world hate you." You, too, must suffer without the gate. Not for the world's redemption, but for the accomplishment of divine purposes in you, and through you to the sons of men, you must be made to know the cross and its shame. Christ is the mirror of the church. What the head endured every member of the body will also have to endure in its measure. Let us read the text in this light, and come to it saying to ourselves, "Here we see what Jesus suffered in our stead, and we learn hereby to love him with all our souls. Here too, we see, as in a prophecy, how great things we are to suffer for his sake at the hands of men." May the Holy Spirit help us in our meditation, so that at the close of it we may more ardently love our Lord, who suffered for us, and may the more carefully arm ourselves with the same mind which enabled him to endure such contradiction of sinners against himself.

Coming at once to the text, first, *observe the acknowledgment* with which the text begins: "He trusted in God." The enemies of Christ admitted his faith in God. Secondly, consider *the test which is the essence of the taunt:* "Let him deliver him, if he will have him." When we have taken those two things into our minds, then let us for a while consider *the answer* to that test and taunt: God does assuredly deliver his people: those who trust in him have no reason to be ashamed of their faith.

I. First, then, my beloved brethren, you who know the Lord by faith and live by trusting in him, let me invite you to OBSERVE THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT which these

mockers made of our Lord's faith: "He trusted in God." Yet the Saviour did not wear any peculiar garb or token by which he let men know that he trusted in God. He was not a recluse, neither did he join some little knot of separatists, who boasted their peculiar trust in Jehovah. Although our Saviour was separate from sinners, yet he was eminently a man among men, and he went in and out among the multitude as one of themselves. His one peculiarity was that "he trusted in God." He was so perfectly a man that, although he was undoubtedly a Jew, there were no Jewish peculiarities about him. Any nation might claim him; but no nation could monopolize him. The characteristics of our humanity are so palpably about him that he belongs to all mankind. I admire the Welch sister who was of opinion that the Lord Jesus must be Welch. When they asked her how she proved it, she said that he always spoke to her heart in Welch. Doubtless it was so, and I can, with equal warmth, declare that he always speaks to me in English. Brethren from Germany, France, Sweden, Italy—you all claim that he speaks to you in your own tongue. This was the one thing which distinguished him among men—"he trusted in God," and he lived such a life as naturally grows out of faith in the Eternal Lord. This peculiarity had been visible even to that ungodly multitude who least of all cared to perceive a spiritual point of character. Was ever any other upon a cross thus saluted by the mob who watched his execution? Had these scorners ever mocked any one before for such a matter as this? I trow not. Yet faith had been so manifest in our Lord's daily life that the crowd cried out aloud, "He trusted in God."

How did they know? I suppose they could not help

seeing that *he made much of God* in his teaching, in his life, and in his miracles. Whenever Jesus spoke it was always godly talk; and if it was not always distinctly about God, it was always about things that related to God, that came from God, that led to God, that magnified God. A man may be fairly judged by that which he makes most of. The ruling passion is a fair gauge of the heart. What a soul-ruler faith is! It sways the man as the rudder guides the ship. When a man once gets to live by faith in God, it tinctures his thoughts, it masters his purposes, it flavors his words, it puts a tone into his actions, and it comes out in everything by ways and means most natural and unconstrained, till men perceive that they have to do with a man who makes much of God. The unbelieving world says outright that there is no God, and the less impudent, who admit his existence, put him down at a very low figure, so low that it does not affect their calculations; but to the true Christian, God is not only much, but all. To our Lord Jesus, God was all in all; and when you come to estimate God as he did, then the most careless onlooker will soon begin to say of you, "He trusted in God."

In addition to observing that Jesus made much of God, men came to note that he was *a trusting man, and not self-confident.* Certain persons are very proud because they are self-made men. I will do them the credit to admit that they heartily worship their maker. Self made them, and they worship self. We have among us individuals who are self-sufficient, and almost all-sufficient; they sneer at those who do not succeed, for *they* can succeed anywhere at anything. The world to them is a football which they can kick where they like. If they do not rise to the very highest eminence it is simply

out of pity to the rest of us, who ought to have a chance. A vat of sufficiency ferments within their ribs! There was nothing of that sort of thing in our Lord. Those who watched him did not say that he had great self-reliance and a noble spirit of self-confidence. No, no! They said, "He trusted in God." Indeed it was so. The words that he spake he spake not of himself, and the great deeds that he did he never boasted of, but said, "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." He was a truster in God, not a boaster in self. Brethren and sisters, I desire that you and I may be just of that order. Self-confidence is the death of confidence in God; reliance upon talent, tact, experience, and things of that kind, kills faith. Oh that we may know what faith means, and so look out of ourselves and quit the evil confidence which looks within!

On the other hand, we may wisely remember that, while our Lord Jesus was not self-reliant, *he trusted, and was by no means despondent:* he was never discouraged. He neither questioned his commission, nor despaired of fulfilling it. He never said, "I must give it up: I can never succeed." No; "He trusted in God." And this is a grand point in the working of faith, that while it keeps us from self-conceit, it equally preserves us from enfeebling fear. When our blessed Lord set his face like a flint; when, being baffled, he returned to the conflict; when, being betrayed, he still persevered in his love, then men could not help seeing that he trusted in God. His faith was not mere repetition of a creed, or profession of belief, but it was childlike reliance upon the Most High. May ours be of the same order!

It is evident that the Lord Jesus *trusted in God openly*, since even yonder gibing crowd proclaim it. Some good

people try to exercise faith on the sly: they practice it in snug corners, and in lonely hours, but they are afraid to say much before others, for fear their faith should not see the promised fulfilled. They dare not say, with David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." This secrecy robs God of his honor. Brethren, we do not glorify our God as he ought to be glorified. Let us trust in him, and own it. Wherefore should we be ashamed? Let us throw down the gauge of battle to earth and hell. God, the true and faithful, deserves to be trusted without limit. Trust your all with him, and be not ashamed of having done so. Our Saviour was not ashamed of trusting in his God. On the cross he cried, "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breast." Jesus lived by faith. We are sure that he did, for in the Epistle to the Hebrews he is quoted as saying, "I will put my trust in him." If so glorious a personage as the only-begotten Son of God lived here by faith in God, how are you and I to live except by trust in God? If we live unto God, this is the absolute necessity of our spiritual life: "the just shall live by faith." Shall we be ashamed of that which brings life to us? The cruel ones who saw Jesus die did not say, "He now and then trusted in God"; nor "He trusted in the Lord years ago"; but they admitted that faith in God was the constant tenor of his life: they could not deny it. Even though, with malicious cruelty, they turned it into a taunt, yet they did not cast a question upon the fact that "he trusted in God." Oh, I want you so to live that those who dislike you most may, nevertheless, know that you do trust in God. When you come to die, may your dear children say of you, "Our dear mother did

trust in the Lord"! May that boy who has gone furthest away from Christ, and grieved your heart the most, nevertheless say in his heart, "There may be hypocrites in the world, but my dear father does truly trust in God!" Oh, that our faith may be known unmistakably! We do not wish it to be advertised to our own honor. That be far from our minds. But yet we would have it known, that others may be encouraged, and that God may be glorified. If nobody else trusts in God, let us do so; and thus may we uplift a testimony to the honor of his faithfulness. When we die, may this be our epitaph—"He trusted in God."

David, in the twenty-second Psalm, represents the enemies as saying of our Lord—"He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." This *practical faith* is sure to be known wherever it is in operation, because it is exceedingly rare. Multitudes of people have a kind of faith in God, but it does not come to the practical point of trusting that God will deliver them. I see upon the newspaper placards, "*Startling News! People in the Planets!*" Not a very practical discovery. For many a day there has been a tendency to refer God's promises and our faith to the planets, or somewhere beyond this present every-day life. We say to ourselves, "Oh yes, God delivers his people." We mean that he did so in the days of Moses, and possibly he may be doing so now in some obscure island of the sea. Ah me! The glory of faith lies in its being fit for every-day wear. Can it be said of you, "He trusted in God, that he would deliver him"? Have you faith of the kind which will make you lean upon the Lord in poverty, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in slander, in contempt? Have you a trust in God to bear you up in

holy living at all costs, and in active service, even beyond your strength? Can you trust in God definitely about this and that? Can you trust about food, and raiment, and home? Can you trust God even about your shoes, that they shall be iron and brass, and about the hairs of your head that they are all numbered? What we need is less theory and more actual trust in God.

The faith of the text was personal: "that he would *deliver him.*" Blessed is that faith which can reach its arm of compassion around the world, but that faith must begin at home. Of what use were the longest arm if it were not fixed to the man himself at the shoulder? If you have no faith about yourself, what faith can you have about others? "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him." Come, beloved, have you such a faith in the living God? Do you trust in God through Christ Jesus that he will save you? Yes, you poor unworthy one, the Lord will deliver you if you trust him. Yes, poor woman, or unknown man, the Lord can help you in your present trouble, and in every other, and he will do so if you trust him to that end. May the Holy Spirit lead you to first trust the Lord Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then to trust in God for all things.

Let us pause a minute. Let a man trust in God; not in fiction, but in fact, and he will find that he has the solid rock under his feet. Let him trust about his own daily needs and trials, and rest assured that the Lord will actually appear for him, and he will not be disappointed. Such a trust in God is a very *reasonable* thing, its absence is most unreasonable. If there be a God, he knows all about my case. If he made my ear, he can hear me; if he made my eye he can see me; and there-

fore he perceives my condition. If he be my Father, as he says he is, he will certainly care for me, and will help me in my hour of need, if he can. We are sure that he can, for he is omnipotent. Is there anything unreasonable, then, in trusting in God that he will deliver us? I venture to say that if all the forces in the universe were put together, and all the kindly intents of all who are our friends were put together, and we were then to rely upon those united forces and intents, we should not have a thousandth part so much justification for our confidence as when we depend upon God, whose intents and forces are infinitely greater than those of all the world beside. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." If you view things in the white light of pure reason, it is infinitely more reasonable to trust in the living God than in all his creatures put together.

Certainly, dear friends, it is extremely *comfortable* to trust in God. I find it so, and therefore speak. To roll your burden upon the Lord, since he will sustain you, is a blessed way of being quit of care. We know him to be faithful, and as powerful as he is faithful; and our dependence upon him is the solid foundation of a profound peace.

While it is comfortable, it is also *uplifting*. If you trust in men, the best of men, you are likely to be lowered by your trust. We are apt to cringe before those who patronize us. If your prosperity depends upon a person's smile, you are tempted to pay homage even when it is undeserved. The old saying mentions a certain person as "knowing on which side his bread is buttered." Thousands are practically degraded by their

trusting in men. But when our reliance is upon the living God, we are raised by it, and elevated both morally and spiritually. You may bow in deepest reverence before God, and yet there will be no fawning. You may lie in the dust before the Majesty of heaven, and yet not be dishonored by your humility; in fact, it is our greatness to be nothing in the presence of the Most High.

This confidence in God makes men *strong*. I should advise the enemy not to oppose the man who trusts in God. In the long run he will be beaten, as Haman found it with Mordecai. He had been warned of this by Zeresh, his wife, and his wise men, who said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him." Contend not with a man who has God at his back. Years ago, the Mentonese desired to break away from the dominion of the Prince of Monaco. They therefore drove out his agent. The prince came with his army, not a very great one, it is true, but still formidable to the Mentonese. I know not what the high and mighty princeling was not going to do; but news came that the King of Sardinia was coming up in the rear to help the Mentonese, and therefore his lordship of Monaco very prudently retired to his own rock. When a believer stands out against evil he may be sure that the lord of hosts will not be far away. The enemy shall hear the dash of his horse-hoof and the blast of his trumpet, and shall flee before him. Wherefore be of good conrage, and compel the world to say of you, "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him."

II. Secondly, I want you to follow me briefly in considering THE TEST WHICH IS THE ESSENCE OF THE TAUNT which was hurled by the mockers against our

Lord—"Let him deliver him now, if he will have him." Such a test will come to all believers. It may come as a taunt from enemies; it will certainly come as a trial of your faith. The arch-enemy will assuredly hiss out "Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

This taunt has about it *the appearance of being very logical*, and indeed in a measure so it is. If God has promised to deliver us, and we have openly professed to believe the promise, it is only natural that others should say, "Let us see whether he does deliver him. This man believes that the Lord will help him; and he must help him, or else the man's faith is a delusion." This is the sort of test to which we ourselves would have put others before our conversion, and we cannot object to be proved in the same manner ourselves. Perhaps we incline to run away from the ordeal, but this very shrinking should be a solemn call to us to question the genuineness of that faith which we are afraid to test. "He trusted on the Lord," says the enemy, "that he would deliver him: let him deliver him;" and surely, however malicious the design, there is no escaping from the logic of the challenge.

It is peculiarly painful to have this stern inference driven home to you in the hour of sorrow. Because one cannot deny the fairness of the appeal, it is all the more trying. In the time of depression of spirit it is hard to have one's faith questioned, or the ground on which it stands made a matter of dispute. Either to be mistaken in one's belief, or to have no real faith, or to find the ground of one's faith fail, is an exceedingly grievous thing. Yet, as our Lord was not spared this painful ordeal, we must not expect to be kept clear of it, and Satan knows well how to work these questions, till the poison

of them sets the blood on fire. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him;" he hurls this fiery dart into the soul, till the man is sorely wounded, and can scarcely hold his ground.

The taunt is specially *pointed and personal.* It is put thus: "*He* trusted on the Lord that he would deliver *him:* let him deliver *him;*" "Do not come to us with your fiddle-faddle about God's helping all his chosen, Here is a man who is one of his people, will he help *him?* Do not talk to us big things about Jehovah at the Red Sea, or in the Desert of Sinai, or God helping his people in ages past. Here is a living man before us who trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver *him* now." You know how Satan will pick out one of the most afflicted, and pointing his fingers at him will cry, "Let him deliver HIM." Brethren, the test is fair. God will be true to every believer. If any one child of God could be lost, it would be quite enough to enable the devil to spoil all the glory of God for ever. If one promise of God to one of his people should fail, that one failure would suffice to mar the veracity of the Lord to all eternity; they would publish it in the "Diabolical Gazette," and in every street of Tophet they would howl it out, "God has failed. God has broken his promise. God has ceased to be faithful to his people." It would then be a horrible reproach—"He trusted in God to deliver him, but he did not deliver him."

Much emphasis lies in its being *in the present tense:* "He trusted in God that he would deliver him: let him deliver him *now.*" I see Thee, O Lord Jesus, thou art not now in the wilderness, where the fiend is saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." No. Thou art nailed to the tree; thine

enemies have hemmed thee in. The legionaries of Rome are at the foot of the cross, the Scribes and Pharisees and raging Jews compass thee about. There is no escape from death for thee! Hence their cry—"Let him deliver him *now*." Ah, brothers and sisters! this is how Satan assails us, using our present and pressing tribulations as the barbs of his arrows. Yet here also there is reason and logic in the challenge.

If God does not deliver his servants at one time as well as another, he has not kept his promise. For a man of truth is always true, and a promise once given always stands. A promise cannot be broken now and then, and yet the honor of the person giving it be maintained by his keeping it at other times. The word of a true man stands always good: it is good *now*. This is logic, bitter logic, cold steel logic, logic which seems to cut right down your backbone and cleave your chine. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him now." Yet this hard logic can be turned to comfort. I told you a story the other day of the brother in Guy's Hospital to whom the doctors said he must undergo an operation which was extremely dangerous. They gave him a week to consider whether he would submit to it. He was troubled for his young wife and children, and for his work for the Lord. A friend left a bunch of flowers for him, with this verse as its motto, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now." "Yes," he thought "*now*." In prayer he cast himself upon the Lord, and felt in his heart, "Come on, doctors, I am ready for you." When the next morning came, he refused to take chloroform, for he desired to go to heaven in his senses. He bore the operation manfully, and he is yet alive. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him" then and

there, and the Lord did so. In this lies the brunt of the battle.

A Christian man may be beaten in business, he may fail to meet all demands, and then Satan yells, "Let him deliver him *now*." The poor man has been out of work for two or three months, tramping the streets of London until he has worn out his boots; he has been brought to his last penny. I think I hear the laugh of the Prince of Darkness as he cries, "Let him deliver him *now*." Or else the believer is very ill in body, and low in spirit, and then Satan howls, "Let him deliver him *now*." Some of us have been in very trying positions. We were moved with indignation because of deadly error, and we spoke plainly, but men refused to hear. Those we relied upon deserted us; good men sought their own ease and would not march with us, and we had to bear testimony for despised truth alone, until we were ourselves despised Then the adversary shouted, "Let him deliver him *now*." Be it so! We do not refuse the test. Our God whom we serve will deliver us. We will not bow down to modern thought nor worship the image which human wisdom has set up. Our God is God both of hills and of valleys. He will not fail his servants, albeit that for a while he forbears that he may try their faith. We dare accept the test, and say, "Let him deliver us *now*."

Beloved friends, we need not be afraid of this taunt if it is brought by adversaries; for, after all, the test will come to us apart from any malice, for *it is inevitable*. All the faith you have will be tried. I can see you heaping it up. How rich you are! What a pile of faith! Friend, you are almost perfect! Open the furnace door and put the heap in. Do you shrink? See how it shrivels! Is there anything left? Bring hither a mag-

nifying glass. Is this all that is left? Yes, this is all that remains of the heap. You say, "I trusted in God." Yes, but you had reason to cry, "Lord, help my unbelief." Brethren, we have not a tithe of the faith we think we have. But whether or not, all our faith must be tested. God builds no ships but what he sends to sea. In living, in losing, in working, in weeping, in suffering, or in striving, God will find a fitting crucible for every single grain of the precious faith which he has given us. Then he will come to us and say—You trusted in God that he would deliver you, and you shall be delivered now. How you will open your eyes as you see the Lord's hand of deliverance! What a man of wonders you will be when you tell in your riper years to the younger people how the Lord delivered you! Why, there are some Christians I know of who, like the Ancient Mariner, could detain even a wedding guest with their stories of God's wonders on the deep.

Yes, the test will come again and again. May the gibes of adversaries only make us ready for the sterner ordeals of the judgment to come. O my dear friends, examine your religion. You have a great deal of it, some of you; but what of its quality? Can your religion stand the test of poverty, and scandal, and scorn? Can it stand the test of scientific sarcasm and learned contempt? Will your religion stand the test of long sickness of body and depression of spirit caused by weakness? What are you doing amid the common trials of life? What will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Examine well your faith, since all hangs there. Some of us who have lain for weeks together, peering through the thin veil which parts us from the unseen, have been made to feel that nothing will suffice us but a promise

which will answer the taunt, "Let him deliver us *now*."

III. I shall finish, in the third place, dear friends, by noticing THE ANSWER to the test. God does deliver those who trust in him. God's interposition for the faithful is not a dream, but a substantial reality. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." All history proves the faithfulness of God. Those who trust God have been in all sorts of troubles; but they have always been delivered. They have been bereaved. What a horrible bereavement was that which fell to the lot of Aaron, when his two sons were struck dead for their profanity in the presence of God! "And Aaron held his peace"! What grace was there! Thus will the Lord sustain you also, should he take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Grave after grave has the good man visited, till it seemed that his whole race was buried, and yet his heart has not been broken; but he has bowed his soul before the will of the ever-blessed One. Thus has the Lord delivered his afflicted one by sustaining him. In other ways the bush has burned, and yet has not been consumed. Remember the multiplied and multiform trials of Job. Yet God sustained him to the end, so that he did not charge God foolishly, but held fast his faith in the Most High. If ever you are called to the afflictions of Job, you will also be called to the sustaining grace of Job. Some of God's servants have been defeated in their testimony. They have borne faithful witness for God, but they have been rejected of men. It has been their lot, like Cassandra, to prophesy the truth, but not to be believed. Such was Jeremiah, who was born to a heritage of scorn from those whose benefit he sought.

Yet he was delivered. He shrank not from being faithful. His courage could not be silenced. By integrity he was delivered.

Godly men have been despised and misrepresented, and yet have been delivered. Remember David and his envious brethren, David and the malignant Saul, David when his men spake of stoning him. Yet he took off the giant's head; yet he came to the throne; yet the Lord built him a house.

Some of God's servants have been bitterly persecuted, but God has delivered them. Daniel came forth from the lions' den, and the three holy children from the midst of the burning fiery furnace. These are only one or two out of millions who trusted God and he delivered them. Out of all manner of ill the Lord delivered them. God brought this crowd of witnesses through all their trials unto his throne, where they rest with Jesus, and share the triumphs of their Master at this very day. O my timid brother, nothing has happened to you but what is common to men. Your battle is not different from the warfare of the rest of the saints; and as God has delivered them he will deliver you also, seeing you put your trust in him.

But *God's ways of deliverance are his own.* He does not deliver according to the translation put upon "deliverance" by the ribald throng. He does not deliver according to the interpretation put upon "deliverance" by our shrinking flesh and blood. He delivers, but it is in his own way. Let me remark that, *if God delivers you and me in the same way as he delivered his own Son, we can have no cause of complaint.* If the deliverance which he vouchsafed to us is of the same kind as that which he vouchsafed to the Only Begotten, we may well

be content. Well, what kind of a deliverance was that? Did the Father tear up the cross from the earth? Did he proceed to draw out the nails from the sacred hands and feet of his dear Son? Did he set him down upon that "green hill far away, beyond the city wall," and place in his hand a sword of fire with which to smite his adversaries? Did he bid the earth open and swallow up all his foes? No; nothing of the kind. Jehovah did not interpose to spare his Son a single pang; but he let him die. He let him be taken as a dead man down from the cross and laid in a tomb. Jesus went through with his suffering to the bitter end. O, brothers and sisters, this may be God's way of delivering us. We have trusted in God that he would deliver us; and his rendering of his promise is, that he will enable us to go through with it; we shall suffer to the last, and triumph in so doing.

Yet God's way of delivering those who trust in him is *always the best way.* If the Father had taken his Son down from the cross, what would have been the result? Redemption unaccomplished, salvation work undone, and Jesus returning with his life-work unfinished. This would not have been deliverance, but defeat. It was much better for our Lord Jesus to die. Now he has paid the ransom for his elect, and having accomplished the great purpose of atonement, he has slept a while in the heart of the earth, and now has ascended to his throne in the endless glories of heaven. It was deliverance of the fullest kind; for from the pangs of his death has come the joy of life to his redeemed. It is not God's will that every mountain should be levelled, but that we should be the stronger for climbing the Hill Difficulty. God will deliver; he must deliver, but he will do it in

our cases, as in the case of our Lord, in the best possible manner.

Anyhow, he will deliver his chosen: the taunt of the adversary shall not cause our God to forget or forego his people. I know that the Lord will no more fail me than any other of his servants. He will not leave a faithful witness to his adversaries. "I know that my Avenger liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Is this also your confidence? Then do not sit down in sorrow, and act as though you despaired. Quit yourselves like men. Be strong, fear not. Cast yourselves on the love that never changeth and never fainteth, and the Lord will answer all the revilings of Rabshakeh, and the blusterings of Sennacherib.

There are times when we may use this text to our comfort. "Let him deliver him now," saith the text, "if he will have him." You, dear friends, who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ before, how I wish you could try him now! You feel this morning full of sin, and full of need. Come, then, and trust the Saviour *now*. See whether he will not save you *now*. Is there one day in the year in which Jesus cannot save a sinner? Come and see whether the 17th of June is that day. Try whether he will not deliver you *now* from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin. Why not come? You have never, perhaps, been in the Tabernacle before, and when coming here this morning you did not think of finding the Saviour. Oh, that the Saviour may find

you! Jesus Christ is a Saviour every day, all the year round. Whoever cometh to him shall find eternal life *now*. "Oh," you say, "I am in such an unfit state; I am in all the deshabille of my carelessness and godlessness." Come along, man, come along, just as you are. Tarry not for improvement or arrangement, for both of these Jesus will give you; come and put your trust in the great Sacrifice for sin, and he will deliver you—deliver you *now*. Lord, save the sinner, *now!*

Others of you are the children of God, but you are in peculiar trouble. Well, what are you going to do? You have always trusted in God before; are you going to doubt him now? "O my dear sir, you do not know my distress; I am the most afflicted person in the Tabernacle." Be it so; but you trusted in the Lord the past twenty years, and I do not believe that you have seen any just cause for denying him your confidence now. Did you say that you have known him from your youth up? What! you seventy years of age? Then you are too near home to begin distrusting your heavenly Father. That will never do. You have been to sea, and have weathered many a storm in mid-ocean, and are you now going to be drowned in a ditch? Think not so. The Lord will deliver you even now. Do not let us suppose that we have come where boundless love and infinite wisdom cannot reach us. Do not fancy that you have leaped upon a ledge of rock so high as to be out of reach of the everlasting arm. If you had done so I would sttll cry—Throw yourself down into the arms of God, and trust that he will not let you be destroyed.

It may be that some of us are in trouble about the church and the faith. We have defended God's truth as well as we could, and spoken out against deadly error;

but craft and numbers have been against us, and at present things seem to have gone wrong. The good are timid, and the evil are false. They say, "He trusted in God: let him deliver him now." Sirs, he will deliver us now. We will throw our soul once more into this battle, and see if the Lord does not vindicate his truth. If we have not spoken in God's name we are content to go back to the dust from whence we sprang; but if we have spoken God's truth we defy the whole confederacy to prevail against it.

Peradventure I speak to some missionary, who is mourning over a time of great trial in a mission which is dear to his heart. Ah, dear friend! Christ intended that the gospel should repeat his own experience, and then should triumph like himself. The gospel lives by being killed and conquers by defeat. Cast it where you will, it always falls upon its feet. You need not be afraid of it under any trial. Just now, the wisdom of man is its worst foe, but the Lord will deliver it *now*. The gospel lives and reigns. Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth from the tree, and from that tree of the curse he issues his supreme commands. The self-same day in which Jesus died, he took with him into his kingdom and his inmost paradise a thief who had hung at his side. He liveth and reigneth for ever and ever, and calleth to himself whomsoever he hath chosen. Let us drown the taunts of the adversary with our shouts of Hallelujah! The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah. Amen!

XI.

THE CHARGE OF THE ANGEL.

July 8, 1888.

"The angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."—ACTS v. 19, 20.

THE second persecution of the church, in which all the apostles were put into the common prison, was mainly brought about by the sect of the Sadducees. These, as you know, were the Broad School, the liberals, the advanced thinkers, the modern-thought people of the day. If you want a bitter sneer, a biting sarcasm, or a cruel action, I commend you to these large-minded gentlemen. They are liberal to everybody, except to those who hold the truth; and for those they have a reserve of concentrated bitterness which far excels wormwood and gall. They are so liberal to their brother errorists, that they have no tolerance to spare for evangelicals. We are expressly told that "the high priest, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) were filled with indignation." That which had been done deserved their admiration, but received their indignation. Such gentlemen as these can be warm at a very short notice, when the doctrine of the cross is spreading, and God the Holy Spirit is bearing witness with signs following. Let them display their indignation, it is according to their nature.

To them the only answer which God gave was spoken by his angel: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Argument will be lost upon them; go on with your preaching. They have lost the faculty of believing: go and speak to the people. They are so given over to their doubts, that it is like rolling the stone of Sisyphus to persuade them to faith. They are so eaten up with objections, that to attempt to answer all the questions they raise would be as vain as the labor of filling a bottomless tub. Go on with your preaching, you apostles; but address yourselves mainly to the people. Extend as widely as possible the range of the truth, and thus answer the opposition of its adversaries. It is better to evangelize than to controvert. The preaching of the word of life is the best antidote to the doctrine of death.

Clearly enough, if they had known it, and had been capable of seeing it, these blind Sadducees were answered at every point when the apostles were brought out of prison and bore witness to their Lord. Here was the creed of the Sadducees: they said that "there was no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit;" but these apostles stood up and witnessed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. What did they make of that? An angel had come from heaven and had brought these apostles out of prison. Then there were angels. As these apostles were set free while the sentries remained standing before the doors, and those doors were afterwards found fastened, if there were no spirit, assuredly materialism had acted in a singular fashion. Every item of their negative creed had been made to fall like Dagon before the ark. The Lord always arranges Red Seas for Pharaohs. All that the apostles had to do was to go on

with their preaching, and this they did; for "daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

This morning may we be profited while we consider our text and its surroundings. May he who spake by his angel now speak to our hearts by his Spirit.

I. In reviewing the whole story which we read just now, from the seventeenth verse to the end of the chapter, my first thought is that THE AGENTS EMPLOYED FOR SPREADING THE GOSPEL ARE MEN, AND NOT ANGELS. The angel of the Lord opened the prison door and set free the preachers, but might not be a preacher himself. He might give the ministers their charge, but he had no charge to preach himself. Surely the angel who brought them out of prison was quite able to have gone and proclaimed the gospel, and so he might have brought many out of their prison spiritually. But no; it must not be. His commission permits him to say to the apostles, "Go and speak to the people," but it does not permit him to join in their testimony.

I think that almost with reluctance the angel of the Lord returned to his Master, and left the chosen men to go upon their blessed errand. As our Lord took not on him the nature of angels for man's redemption, so neither doth he employ the agency of angels for man's conversion. I feel glad that, in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, angels are not our competitors, at this present time at any rate. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." They are ministering spirits, but they have not received the Holy Spirit anointing them to the ministry of Christ.

This divine choice of human instrumentality *puts honor upon manhood.* Those redeemed by the blood of Christ

are men, and their redemption from sin by power is to be instrumentally accomplished by men. The great fight which began in the garden of Eden is to be waged by men even to the end. The conquest of the revolted world is to be achieved by men under the leadership of the all-glorious Son of man. Ye see your calling, brethren. I pray you, every one, to preach the gospel in your vocation; but specially would I plead for zeal with those whose very vocation it is to preach the gospel. What a vocation is ours! What can be more honorable? What more responsible? To rule empires is a trifle compared with speaking to the people all the words of this life. "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Thou makest him higher than the angels in this respect, that out of his mouth thou hast ordained strength because of thine enemies. Such honor have all the saints, for they may all either teach or preach Jesus Christ.

My dear hearers, you may be yourselves grateful that this ministry is committed to men, because *it is a condescension to human weakness.* Imperfect as human ministers are, we are better preachers to you than angels could be. We cannot sing with their celestial melody, nor charm you with their seraphic eloquence; but we have a sympathy with you which they cannot feel, seeing they are not compassed with infirmities, nor humbled by imperfections. We know your sins, your sorrows, your struggles. We know the roughness of the road you traverse; for we, too, came in at the wicket-gate, and have floundered in the Slough of Despond, and scrambled up the Hill Difficulty. We can have compassion, and give direction learned by experience. I suppose an angel would command a very large congregation for a time;

but, after a while, you would feel that there was something alien and distant about the manner of his teaching. You would be awed rather than comforted. A being altogether superior to yourselves would before long drive you to cry for your old minister again, with lips of clay and heart of love. You would prefer our feeble pleadings to the more glorious, but less brotherly, address of an angel from heaven.

God's use of the ministry of men is honorable to men, and it is condescending to men, and surely it *is a blow at Satanic pride.* The Prince of the Power of the air might have felt proud to contend with angels, finding in them foemen worthy of his steel; but when the arch-enemy sees before him no combatant but a man sent of God, he feels like Goliath when he saw David, a youth and ruddy, approaching him with a sling and a stone. Disdaining such an adversary, I hear him cry, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" Yes, Satan, thou art no better than a dog, and we come against thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. By humble, truth-speaking, earnest men the Lord turns the battle, and routs the forces of error, that the old Serpent may still feel the foot of the seed of the woman upon his head. He thought he had made an easy prey of man; but it shall be by man that the enemy shall be driven back to his infernal den with defeat. By man came death, and by man came also the resurrection of the dead; which glorious fact is proclaimed by man, to the eternal shame of him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil.

To work by men *must bring special glory to God.* The weaker the instrument, the more honor to the worker. I like to think, whatever I may feel driven to believe from

Scripture, that the great fight between good and evil will be so fought out that the Lord shall conquer by feeble men even to the end. The omnipotence of God will be glorified in the insignificance of the agents by whom he will achieve the everlasting triumph. Those first apostles brought all the more glory to God because they came from the fishers' nets, and were called "unlearned and ignorant men." The weakness which men despised compelled them to confess that the power which they wielded was divine. The Spirit of God who spoke by them found in them no fancied wisdom to obstruct his impulses. If the Lord will graciously use us poor ministers to the end, it will wonderfully illustrate his wisdom and power. Somebody once said that it proved the divinity of our holy religion that it survived ministers; and there was a good deal of truth in the remark. How I have wondered that this congregation have survived me! and I think we may wonder that as a whole the gospel survives its advocates. We are poor tools. I do not refer to you, brethren, from America, but I mean all of us in England, and especially myself. We are poor tools after all; and if God uses us to save sinners and sanctify saints, he must certainly have all the glory of it. Brethren, the Lord has used us, blessed be his name! He has used us; we should give the lie to manifest facts if we were to deny it. Brethren, the Lord means to use us. He hath said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

I cannot help adding that the employment of men as soul-winners *gives a tender joy to the heart of Jesus.* It pleases the Lord Jesus Christ that God should use men; for he himself is a man. God, as he is, blessed for ever, yet is he most truly man, delighting in humanity,

and pleased to see men called to a work of so much glory and honor. He loves to bless men and to see them made a blessing. He delights to see the many brethren used in their measure in the same way as himself, the First-born. The Lord Jesus must take great pleasure in the attempts of his servants to seek and to save souls: for they are learning to be shepherds like himself. When our King, Edward III., heard that the Black Prince was having a hard battle with the French, he smiled to think that his son was in a place where he could show his valor. When he was entreated to send off reinforcements, he refused; for he wished his son to have the undivided honors of the day. The Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, puts some of his chosen into places of great peril, and he does not seem to send them all the help they could desire, in order that they may prove their faith and consecration, and thus earn their spurs. He takes a brotherly pleasure in the courage and faith which he himself has wrought in them. All the valor of Christ's soldiers is given them by himself, and all that it achieves is to be attributed to him; yet he finds joy in seeing them exercise their graces. Like as a father delights to see his boy take prize after prize at the University, like as a friend delights to see his friend elected to one honorable position after another, so does Jesus rejoice in the honors earned by his servants in the field of service. When we save a soul from death, Jesus, the Saviour, rejoices in the deed. When we thus cover a multitude of sins, Jesus, the sin-bearer, sees of the travail of his soul. The father in the parable was glad when his prodigal son was found; but he would have been gladder still had a brother found him. Our Lord Jesus desires to make us happy with that which makes

himself happy, and so he sends us out to win souls. All these are good reasons why the Lord should employ men and women to spread the gospel rather than cherubim and seraphim. Dear friends, do you not think that the angels must often wonder at us? When they see men eager upon politics and negligent of souls, are they not astonished? Do they never say, "We wish the great Lord would let us go and speak to perishing souls. We would speak with all our hearts"? Do they not sometimes say to one another, "What are these men at? Do they disdain their high calling? God has given to them the great privilege of preaching and teaching his holy word, but they do not care to do it. They speak as if they were half asleep. Where is their zeal for God, their love to men, their earnestness for Christ?" Brethren, these holy spirits must feel ashamed of us! True, they are our servants, and bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our feet against a stone; but must they not sometimes wish that we were stronger on our feet, and were more eager to dash our hands against the enemies of God? We are carried as invalids, when we ought to be fighting like champions. I charge you by the angels of God, who are not permitted to touch this holy work, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season. Preach with a vigor worthy of the divine exercise. Preach the word in some such style as you would expect from those who are bought with the precious blood of Jesus.

So have I spoken to you who are men. As for thee, O angel of God, thou hast opened the prison doors and set free the men of God; but thou must now go back to him that sent thee. Bright spirit, I dare not offer thee my pulpit. Feeble as I am, I must do the preaching.

Oh, that thy Lord and mine may help me, and enable me to make full proof of my ministry! Farewell, angel of God, go thou thy way!

II. Secondly, THESE MEN ARE TO TEACH THE PEOPLE. All the words of this life they are to speak.

The manner of their teaching is hinted at—They are to do it promptly, yea, immediately. "Go," says the angel, "go. Do not linger here. Go at once." They did go, so that they were in the temple courts early in the morning. The first beams of the sun that were reflected from the golden roof met their eyes. The first worshippers in those hallowed courts heard the apostles testifying of Jesus and his love. O dear servants of God, let us run with the glad tidings. "The King's business requireth haste." The first moment we can get man or woman to listen to us, let us speak the living word which we have learned at the feet of Jesus.

They were to make this their primary business. "Go," said the angel, "before anything else: this be your chief employ." I should have been tempted to linger a little, just to find out how the angel released the prisoners. He had opened the doors, so we are told, but yet they were found closed and fastened when the officers came, and the sentries had not left their posts. Here is a mystery; I should like to clear it up. Are there not many such mysteries? But the command is pressing and peremptory: "Go, speak to the people." "Let me tarry; one does not see angels every day. Let me stay and take in a more complete idea of the heavenly stranger. Indulge me with a little conversation with one who has seen my Lord. There are a great many questions which I would fain have answered." Dear fellow-worker, we perhaps are tempted to study

very deeply into mysterious points which do not minister to profit; let us, then, hear the angel say, "Go, speak to the people." Let us keep our thoughts to that gospel which we are sent to preach. "The words of this life" will furnish ample scope for all our powers; let us not wander into endless debates, which are rather for curiosity than salvation, and tend rather to gratify our taste than to accomplish our life-purpose. The first and chief business of the man of God is, "Go, stand and speak to the people." However simple the speaking, it may be rather talk than oratory, this is our one great business here below.

It is clear from the text that they were to take a conspicuous place and speak boldly: "Go, stand in the temple." Go where the Sanhedrim holds its sittings, where the high priest and his Sadducean comrades are on the watch. Let not the danger hinder you. Go where all can see you; stand up, and stand out. Wherever the people are, there let your voices be heard. Be there perseveringly, taking your stand, and keeping it till removed by force. The object was to make the gospel known; therefore, let them go to headquarters, let them stand in the chief place of concourse, let them be in the resort of the devout, let them challenge the observation of pilgrims from every corner of the land. Brethren, it is not ours to hide in holes and in corners; our gospel is like the sun, whose line has gone out through all the earth. Let us not speak timidly, for we have not received the spirit of fear, neither will we hide our candle under a bushel. We are to publish the tidings of that life from the dead which has brought life for the dead.

The persons for whom this preaching is designed are

mentioned: "Speak unto the people." "Unto the people," that does not mean the poor to the exclusion of the rich, nor the many to the exclusion of the few. The expression is most comprehensive, and embraces both the masses and the classes. If the men of the council would hear them, let them speak to them. They did so, alas! with small result. This is a truly gospel word of command; for the gospel is glad tidings to all people, and it is to be preached to every creature under heaven. A restricted audience is an unevangelic idea. Go and speak unto the people, then: to all sorts of people, to everybody. Let not a soul escape if you can help it, for your mission is to all mankind. O gospel fisherman, spread the great seine net, which will encompass a great multitude of fishes, and with diligence draw it to shore.

If we take the word "people" in its popular sense, it has a lesson to all who teach the word. Some aim at the intellectual, let us speak to the people all the words of this life. A minister whose congregation numbers about forty all told rejoiced in the smallness of it, because he professed that a greater work could be done with a few than with a larger number. In answer, a friend suggested that he should infer from that statement that a greater work could be done with no people at all. This reduced the hypothesis to an absurdity. "I am sure," said one, "that the better a man preaches the smaller his congregation will become." This shows what a large number of very excellent preachers we have in London. But our business is to reach the people somehow. To obey the text, we must "Go and speak to the people." They need it; are they not perishing for lack of knowledge? The gospel is adapted to their needs and capacities—it is simple, suitable, seasonable, saving. The

people will receive it. If the poor have the gospel peached to them, they will hear it. God inclines the hearts of the multitude to hearken. We read of Jesus, that "all the people were very attentive to hear him." Moreover, the people retain the truth when they receive it. Note this fact in history: the Reformation in Spain was among the nobility, and it was the same in Italy, and the work soon subsided. In England the common people received the truth from Wycliffe, and it never died out. If you wanted to burn a haystack, you would set it alight at the bottom; and if you want a whole nation to feel the power of the gospel, it must first be received by laborers and artisans. The martyrs of England were largely taken from weavers and such like. The people love the man "chosen out of the people." The Bible is their charter, the gospel is their estate, and when they know it, they will retain it with heroic constancy. What is more, they will spread it. Christ's first preachers were of the people; and in the streets of London to-day, and in the Sunday-schools of England to-day, you will find that the people are to the front in holy work. We are glad to see the noble, the great, the rich, the cultured dedicated to our Lord; but, after all, our chief hope lies among the people.

The angel even mentioned *the place to which they were to go:* "Go, stand in the temple." It was the most public place in all Jerusalem; therefore, "Go, stand in the temple" rather than in a private house. It was the likeliest place to find attentive hearers: the noise of the sheep-market and the bazaar would be absent. Those who came early would probably be among the most devout. "Go, stand in the temple." But when they were bidden to stand in the temple it meant that they were to

stand in any place and every place where an audience could be gathered. So they understood it according to the last verse of the chapter: "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Fellow-workers, our business is to speak to the people concerning eternal life; and we must see that we do it. If in this great house so many will gather that the utmost capacity of my voice is used up, this is the place for me to preach in; but if the people will not come here, I must go after them. We must take public halls and assembly rooms; we must even hire theatres and music-halls, or stand in the streets: for we must speak to the people. As men enlightened from on high we must carry the light to the eyes of men. We must carry bread to the hungry, and healing to the diseased. If not by one style of speaking, yet by another, we must so speak as to be heard: it is of no use to go on droning to empty pews, or holding forth to bare walls. We *must* get at the people. This is what the angel bids us do. "Go," said he, "speak to the people all the words of this life."

III. Thirdly, THIS MESSAGE IS DESCRIBED: "Speak to the people all the words of this life." Our teaching, if we are true to Christ, will be not only a doctrine, but a life. The high priest conceived that they preached doctrine; for he said, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine." Yet it may as truly be called life as truth. The Christian religion is like Christ—way, truth, and life. We have to preach "words of life;" truth which brings life, feeds life, and perfects life. We are to preach all the great truths which concern eternal life.

What are the "words of this life?" If I had to give a short list of them, I should say, the first word of this

life is "*Jesus Christ;*" for in the forty-second verse we read, "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ:" Jesus has the words of eternal life. We preach his Deity, his manhood, his offices, his sacrificial death, his resurrection, and everything about him. We preach Christ crucified, and if we did not, we should not speak the words of life.

The next word to use would be "*atonement.*" There is no preaching "the words of this life" except we preach the sacrificial death of the Son of God. The apostles boldly spoke of our Lord's death, for they said to the council, "Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." They had mentioned the precious blood; for the high priest said, "Ye intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Leave out the satisfaction made by Christ for sin, leave out the doctrine of a real and effective substitution, and you have left out of the gospel "the blood which is the life thereof." "The words of this life" are not preached to the people where the cross is put in the background.

The next word, to my mind, would be "*resurrection.*" This they preached very fully, saying, "Him hath God raised from the dead." The resurrection of Chirst secured the justification of believers, and also guaranteed their resurrection from the dead by virtue of their union with him. If the resurrection were more fully preached at this time, I am sanguine that it would be a powerful means of conversion.

Nor could the apostles forget "*regeneration.*" They would echo their Lord's words, "Ye must be born again." This new birth is possible to you, for "he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Leave out the doctrine of the new birth, and you have left out one of the cardinal "words of this life."

Then comes "*faith*." What a word is this! "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "By grace ye are saved through faith." He who does not preach justification by faith has not begun to preach "the words of this life." He that believeth in Christ hath everlasting life; but without faith all is death.

The sixth out of seven words is "*indwelling*." The Holy Spirit comes into the heart, and abides there, working sanctification within, and producing holiness without. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" and if holiness be not preached as the effect of the indwelling Spirit of God, "all the words of this life" are not spoken to the people.

Then come the doctrines of *the eternal life:* that the life given by the Holy Spirit never dies. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This eternal life is seen here in the perseverance of the saints; it is seen hereafter in their immortality and endless glory. To leave out this would be to leave out the grandest of "the words of this life."

If you desire another outline of the gospel, I would refer you to Peter's little address to the council. Read at the twenty-ninth verse. Here is *the principle of this life:* "We ought to obey God rather than men." He who gets this life into him, will be under law to God, and when that law goes counter to the authority of man, man's law will go to the wall. God is supreme to the man who has this life: he lives as an obedient child of God.

The next great truth mentioned by Peter is *the cause of this life*. He declared the death of Christ—"Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree;" that followed by his resurrection—"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus;"

that followed by his ascension to glory—"Him hath God exalted with his right hand." These are historical facts which contain vital doctrines. We must keep on hammering away at this: Jesus died, rose again, and rose to heaven to make intercession for us; because of all this there is life for the sons of men. There is no teaching "all the words of this life" unless these three great facts flame out like the stars of heaven, and are made to be essential to our eternal life.

Then comes *the manner by which we receive this life*, namely, as a free gift. Jesus is exalted "to give repentance." The gift of God is eternal life. Salvation is by free grace, and free grace alone. "This life" is never an evolution. Spiritual life does not lie dormant within the dead heart of man; it is an importation from heaven, an implantation by the Spirit. We are quickened by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit.

Here we have *the beginning of this life*, namely, repentance, a sense of sin, a turning from it, an abhorrence of it: this is the gift of Jesus, and the beginning of the new life.

Then you have *the privilege of this life*—"forgiveness of sin." He that lives in Christ is set free from the guilt of sin by the righteousness of Christ.

Then comes *the evidence of this life*—"whereof we are witnesses." We speak to you of a life which we have felt. We do not talk to you about an imaginary thing: we speak about a fact which we have observed, nay, a fact which we have felt. A far greater witness is the Holy Ghost, who, as he converts and sanctifies men, bears the best possible testimony to the truth and life of the gospel.

The fruit of this life must also be preached—"whom

God hath given to them that obey him." There is no life in Christ apart from obedience to Christ. Obedience is the sure result of our being made to live by the Spirit of God, nor must this ever be forgotten.

Thus have I very roughly told you what you are to preach.

IV. But now, fourthly, THE WHOLE OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED. "Stand in the temple, and speak unto the people *all* the words of this life." Dear brethren, it is forbidden us to omit any part of the gospel. I am very glad it is; for if we were permitted, we should sometimes shirk the unpopular parts of it. Yet surely it would be very *dangerous* to omit any part of the gospel, would it not? It would be like a physician giving a prescription to a dispenser, and the dispenser omitting one of the ingredients. He might kill the patient by the omission. The worst results follow the keeping back of any doctrine: we may not see those results, but they will follow. Possibly only the next generation will fully display the mischief done by a truth concealed or denied. It would be a dangerous experiment for any one of us to make.

And would it not be *presumptuous* to leave out a word? If we might take away from the testimony, who among us is wise enough to know what to omit?

It is a thousand mercies that we are not left to pick and choose, for this would involve us in responsibilities far too weighty to be borne. It is too *responsible* a business for us to enter upon.

Would not the liberty *be injurious to us?* Would it not encourage pride? Should we not think ourselves somebody if we were allowed to make a selection of the best parts of the sacred message? Surely, he that judges is greater than that which is judged. We should

soon imagine ourselves to be far more nearly infallible than the Holy Scriptures.

Would not this greatly *dishonor God?* Would it not suggest that God's gospel is full of superfluities and excrescences, and needs our wisdom to make it perfect? Should we not conclude that the Lord was not so wise as ourselves if he needed our assistance to adapt his gospel to the occasion?

Do you not think it would open a very *easy way for another gospel?* If we might omit, we might also add; and I feel sure we should very soon add a great deal which would neutralize and paralyze that of the gospel which remained. If we felt at liberty to leave out something, we should naturally omit that which is offensive, and away would go the tooth and edge of the gospel. That which is offensive in the gospel is just that which is effective. What men oppose is what God uses. If the offence of the cross had ceased, the power of the cross would have ceased also. It is not left to us to cut and carve the doctrine of Christ: we are to preach "all the words of this life."

Have we done so? That is the question. Have we knowingly concealed anything? "Well," says one, "I have not preached *all* the words of this life *to the people*, but I have preached them to a choice company." But you are told to preach them *all to the people*. The doctrine of reserve must not be tolerated among Protestants. We must not make that philosophical division which is expressed in those two ugly words *esoteric* and *exoteric*. This is abolished by the command to preach to the people "*all* the words of this life." We shall get into no end of mischief and dishonesty if we incline to this Jesuitry. We want an open Bible for every eye, and a plain min-

istry for every ear. We are to preach "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" in fair proportions, and to preach this to the people openly.

At the present moment there is a great tendency to be obscure upon the true and proper Deity of Christ. I enjoyed the commencement of the prayer just offered by our dear friend Dr. John Hall. I enjoyed the whole of it, but I was greatly touched by his lowly adoration of our divine Lord. The Broad men will say that Jesus is divine, but they do not mean that he is God: they speak of his divinity, but they reject his Godhead. This is juggling with words. I hate deceptive phrases. We believe in the Godhead of Jesus, and worship him as God. Christ Jesus is either God or an impostor: there is no halting-place between the two. He said that he was God, he permitted his disciples to think that he was God; he has left words in Scripture which have made millions believe him to be God; and he could not have been a good man if, as a mere man, he had produced such an impression, and had taken no pains to remove it.

There is also a sad tendency to becloud the truth of man's fall and depravity; but if you do not preach man's ruin, you cannot preach "all the words of this life."

You must be clear about his spiritual death, or you will never be right about his quickening into spiritual life. Unless you preach the terrible doom of the wicked, you will never see the greatness of the salvation which comes to us by our Lord Jesus, who has "the words of eternal life."

The work of the Holy Ghost is left too much in the rear by many preachers. Have we not heard of late

that certain children do not need to be converted, that the divine life is in them at their birth? Have they not preached education rather than regeneration, evolution rather than conversion? This is not speaking "all the words of this life." It is telling out "old wives' fables."

Brethren, have we not also a few about us who will not bear "all the words"? for if you preach holiness as the fruits of the new life, they say you are legal. Verily, the results of this life are among the most important of the words which must be spoken to the people. Grace which does not make us hate sin is false grace. We must preach repentance from dead works, and faith which works by love, and the people must be told that Christ has not come to save men *in* their sin but *from* their sin. On this we will be clear as the sun at noon.

If there be any other point of truth which is kept back, let us bring it the more forward. Let us insist doubly upon that which others neglect. It needs that the whole gospel be brought before the people, that they may know it, and feel its power. It will involve you in strife and struggle if you resolve on delivering an all-round gospel; but fear not, the Lord will help you, even he who says to you by his angel, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."

I have done when I have asked what we are doing about this? We who are God's people, what are we doing in this matter? Some of us are preaching. Are we preaching the whole gospel. Has any doctrine been withheld? Let us bring forth things new and old, and keep back nothing. Let us put every stone into the arch, lest our building come to nothing. Have we also preached

these truths as words of life? Have we felt the life in them? Have we expected life to come by them? Our preaching will be very much what we believe it will be; and if we do not believe that God is going to bless it, he is not likely to bless it. If we do not expect to see life created by the living word, we shall preach dead sermons to dead ears.

Have we preached as witnesses? Complaint is made sometimes of a preacher that he says too much about his own experience. I do not believe he can do so, for our experience is our witness-bearing. You can be egotistical, and say that which is to your own credit, and this is censurable: but you can also be happily egostistical, and say that which is to God's glory, and that is commendable. You may lawfully say, "This is true. I have proved it!" This is one great reason why God uses men instead of angels to speak the gospel, because men can support their message by their experience, and angels cannot.

But, beloved friends, are there not some of you who never tell any body "the words of this life"? In such a congregation ought it to be possible to put your finger upon a single regenerated man or woman who has never for a whole lifetime spoken to another about the things of God? Are such persons regenerated? I will not come round and mark you; but, alas! some of you have never even confessed your faith in Christ. If you have not obeyed that important command for yourselves, you are not likely to have done much for the souls of others. But having joined the church of God, are any of you satisfied to be silent? Are you content to let those around you sink to hell? What! never tell of Christ's love? What! never speak of salvation to your own

children and servants? Can this be right? In God's name, wake up! What are you left on this earth for? If there is nothing for you to do, why are you in this sinful world? You ought to be hurried off to heaven, where you might praise God. No, no, I am afraid I am mistaken. You could not praise God in heaven, you have not learned the way. You could not join in the song of the redeemed, for you have never had a rehearsal. Begin, begin, begin at once to praise Jusus in the ears of some one. Tell of Jesus and his love to sinners on earth, or how will you be able to make it known to angels, and principalities, and powers?

Could not some of you do more than you are doing? Are there not young men who might preach on a street-corner or at a cottage-meeting? Some of our evangelistic societies flag for want of preachers. It ought not to be the case. What are you at? If you could not preach to men and women, could you not teach the children? Very many Sunday-schools in this region are straitened dreadfully for want of teachers. I could tell you of ragged-schools on Sunday evenings where multitudes of children are turned away because there are no teachers. What are you at? You confess that you are not your own, but bought with a price by the Lord Jesus: why then do you not serve him? I have succeeded to a large degree in routing some of you out: I miss you on Sunday evenings, and a good miss too, since I know where you are, and that you are out serving God. You take your meal in the morning, and then you feed others in the after part of the day. The Lord bless you in it. You were not created to sit in these pews, and listen to me: there is something better for a mortal man to do than to be a hearer only.

I charge every Christian man and woman here to listen to what I am about to say. Though I am no angel, I repeat in the name of the Lord Jesus the command of the heavenly messenger: Go, stand out boldly, and speak unto the people all the words of this life; and may God bless you. Amen.

XII.

PLAIN DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE SAVED FROM SIN.

July 15, 1888.

"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.—PSALM iv. 4, 5.

DAVID was surrounded with many wicked and cruel enemies. They touched him in a tender place when they mocked his religion, and so turned his glory into shame. They invented all kinds of lies against him; but the worst of all was that they said, "There is no help for him in God." As much as to say, "God hath cast him off; therefore, let men cast him off. He that is forsaken of the Lord is not fit to sit upon the throne of Israel; let us set up Absalom in his place." This was malice indeed.

David first made his appeal to God in prayer. Herein he showed his wisdom. You can drive a better business at the mercy-seat than in the world's jangling markets. You will get more relief from the righteous Lord than from ungodly men. To enter into debate is never so profitable as to enter into devotion. Carry not your complaint into the lower courts, but go at once to the Court of King's Bench, where the Judge of all presides. Copy David and David's Lord, who in the days of his

flesh with strong crying and tears poured out his soul before the Father.

After David had prayed, he expostulated with his adversaries. The first showed his sonship towards God, the second his brotherliness towards men. There is nothing of bitterness in the words I have read to you: they have a kindly voice in them. If his foes had been at all reasonable, they would have listened to his pleadings; but it is to be feared they were otherwise minded. He urges them to cease from sin, and he teaches them the way to do so. In four sentences he helps them to escape from their evil ways, and to become better men. Had God's Spirit applied David's words to their consciences, they would have been pricked in their hearts, and there would have been no need for them to be smitten on the cheek-bone, that their cruel teeth might be broken.

Upon these four precepts I would speak this morning as the Holy Spirit shall give me utterance, trusting, hoping, believing that many who desire a better life may find it while I speak. May God begin with them, that they may begin with God! I have no confidence in my own persuasions; yet, being called to use them, I trust in him that sent me to make them effectual.

David mentions four things as helpful towards ceasing from sinning. The first is, *feel reverent awe.* "Stand in awe, and sin not." The second is, *use thoughtful self-examination:* "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." The third advice is, *make a right approach to God*—"Offer the sacrifice of righteousness": and the fourth is the greatest of them all: *exercise faith*—"Put your trust in the Lord." Here are four stepping-stones across the filthy slough of sin; may you mark them well, and step from one to the other by the

help of God's Spirit, till you reach the other shore, and stand on safe and clean ground!

I. First, FEEL REVERENT AWE: "Stand in awe." It might be translated, "Tremble and sin not." Hardened sinners sin, and tremble not; penitent sinners tremble, and sin not. Gracious work in the heart usually begins with trembling. I cannot believe a man has been saved if he has never trembled before God because of the evil of sin. The old house of depraved nature shakes before it comes down. The returning prodigal must feel, "I am not worthy to be called thy son," or he will never be called a son. He seeks his father's face with much trembling, because he has so grievously offended.

Awe is not a common emotion nowadays. This is a flippant age. Men are rather triflers than tremblers. If there be any doctrine which has peculiar weight and solemnity about it, they try to pare it down to less terrible proportions. Sin is not exceeding sinful to them, nor its punishment exceeding terrible. They would not have us know the terrors of the Lord, though by these very terrors we persuade men. But true religion must have a savour of awe about it: "My heart standeth in awe of thy word," is the expression of one that knows God, and is reconciled to him. Let me say, then, to you who have been thoughtless and careless about your souls until now—we earnestly desire you to consider these words: "Stand in awe."

Remember, *there is a God:* whatever you may desire or others may declare, there is a God who made you, and in whose hand your breath is. There is a God that sitteth in heaven, who beholdeth all the sons of men; and however much you may dislike the thought, there he

is, and there he ever will be, and you will have to deal with him, and he with you, before long.

God is everywhere present, at all times. He has seen all your evil ways, and heard all your hard speeches. No night is so dark as to hide from his eye; no chamber so retired as to shut him out. He has even read your thoughts and imaginations. He notes all, and forgets nothing. All things are ever present to him; the days of your youth, and the years of your manhood lie open before him like a book. If men could but realize that God is there, how could they dare to sin before his very eyes? If at this moment any one of my hearers who is without Christ could only be filled with this one thought, "Thou God seest me," surely he would stand in awe, and at least desire to sin no more. Well may the preacher speak very solemnly when he feels that he is surrounded with God, and that God is within him as well as around him! Well may his hearer tremble if he feels that all his thoughts are at this moment read by God! Stand in awe, I pray you, of God, who is now filling this house, and is in your own houses. Will you sin in God's presence? Can you blaspheme him to his face? Will you disobey him while his eyes are fixed upon you? I pray you stand in awe of the eternal God, in whom you live, and move, and have your being.

Remember that this God, who is everywhere, and sees everything, *is your Judge.* He is pure and holy, and cannot bear iniquity. He is angry with the wicked every day, and will surely visit them for their transgressions. Every sinful act shall have its recompense of reward. Do not doubt it. The world is all in a tangle now, but there will be a day when the Lord will draw out a straight thread for each man. To-day the wicked

prosper, but God will turn their way upside down; and though the righteous be often under a cloud, he will bring forth their judgment as the noonday. Men respect an earthly judge; therefore, I pray you, stand in awe of the Judge of all the earth.

Do not forget also *that your God is almighty.* He has but to will it, and the strongest of us would be crushed more easily than a moth. There is no escaping from the Lord; neither the heights of Carmel nor the depths of the sea could afford shelter for a fugitive from the Lord. Neither can any resist him, for none have any power apart from him. You have heard his thunder, and trembled at the bolts of his lightning; behold how dreadful is God in arms! How dare you sin against a God so great? Stand in awe. Even holy Job, when he came near to the Lord, exclaimed, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." How can you feel him near and not be filled with awe?

Stand in awe of God because *he is infinitely good.* To me personally, some little time ago, the Lord drew very near in a most special and memorable providence. As I saw the hand of the Lord stretched out so marvellously, I felt my very flesh creep, not with alarm, but with a joyful awe of One who could work so tenderly and condescendingly for his tried servant. I knew that he was God by his marvellously gracious care over me, and nearness to my soul in adversity. Verily Jehovah is God, and a great King above all gods. He is to be had in reverence of them that are round about him. I know now why Jacob said at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this

is the gate of heaven." He was filled with a holy dread and solemn awe because God had been so near. I therefore say to you—stand in awe of God, because he is infinitely great and good. The illustration which I quoted from my own personal experience, I could not withhold, because it is, even at this hour, one of the most vivid recollections of my life. God has dealt with me very graciously. Oh, his great goodness! A sense of it is overwhelming. We fear and tremble for all the goodness which the Lord makes to pass before us. Think of sin forgiven, of righteousness imputed, of spiritual life imparted, of that life preserved, supplied, nurtured. Think of providence with all mindful foresight, and abounding supplies. The love of God should make us reverent as angels, and humble as penitents. If the impudence of pride might dare to insult justice, yet it should scorn to injure love. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared: his grace, if not his glory, should command the reverence of the most obdurate hearts. I pray you stand in awe of God, and sin not. If thoughts of this kind could but dwell in men's minds, they would surely perceive that sin is a great wrong to the Lord, and they would flee from it, crying like Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

My dear hearers, stand in awe in reference to *a future state*. You do not doubt the truth which the Holy Spirit has revealed, that when you die you will not cease to be. There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust: "for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Oh, that all persons would remember this wherever they go! I have heard of a soldier—I think he was employed in the sur-

vey of Palestine—who was in the valley of Jehoshaphat, outside Jerusalem, and some one remarked that it was reported by some that this valley would be the scene of the last judgment, and in that place the multitudes would be gathered. The soldier, hearing this, said, "What a crowd there will be! I shall be there, and I will sit on this stone." He sat down to realize the scene, and his imagination acted so powerfully that he seemed to himself to be among the throng, and to behold the great white throne. He was seen to swoon, and fall to the ground. Do you wonder? If any one of us could, in our inmost souls, behold that scene, should we not be overcome? I wish I could so speak this morning that some of you would picture that last tremendous day, for which all other days were made. Behold that *dies iræ*, that day of wrath, that day when justice will sit upon the throne! Behold it by anticipation, for it will soon be upon you in very deed. As surely as you live, you will live again: and for every act on earth you must give an account in that last assize. Trifle not, for the Judge is at the door. We may hear his trumpets before this day is over. Let not this thought be driven from you; rather welcome it, and let it abide in your minds: if you were to think of nothing else for a time you might be justified, since it is of such overwhelming importance that you prepare for your final state. Shall a man live and never think of the end of life? Can a man think it wise to occupy himself with frivolities thoughout the whole of his earthly existence? While he was shaping his eternal condition, will he do nothing else but sport? Will he never think of that day when his position shall be fixed by the verdict of the great Judge? O my dear hearers, do not forget that you have to live in a future state, and

that you will see him who died upon the cross, seated on the throne, in that day when all nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall divide them, the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. May the thought of the eternal reward also rest on your minds! Hear ye, even now, that word of the King to the righteous—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Hear, also, that dread sentence to those on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, think of these things, and "stand in awe, and sin not"! This awe is one of the strongest moral disinfectants: use it largely. There is no fear of your having too much of it. He that has no fear of God before his eyes sins with a high hand, but awe of the Lord leads to purity of life.

II. In the second place, David admonished the ungodly to practice THOUGHTFUL SELF-EXAMINATION. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

I am not trying, my dear hearer, to preach a sermon this morning, but I am longing to take you by the hand, and to lead you in the right way. I pray the Holy Spirit to make you willing to follow my gentle guidance. My dear friend, you are now asked to *think about yourself*—"commune with your own heart." When once men choose the way of evil, they run in it with their eyes shut. They do not wish to consider; it is easier to go blindly on. They will think about their worldly concerns, their profits and losses, their pleasures and amusements; but they refuse seriously to consider their condition before God. O my friend, think of what you are, and where you are, what you have done, what you are

doing, what it will all lead to! Are you such a fool that you will not consider? Then put on the cap and bells, and wear motley, and take to your proper trade. And yet, even if you were a merry-andrew, it would become you sometimes to be wise as well as merry, and to take a look into the future, lest you have to take a leap in the dark at last.

Especially think of the state of your heart. This is the vital point. Are you right with God? Do you serve your Maker? Have you truly repented of former sin? Have you fled to Christ as your refuge? Have you been born again? Are you the subject of sanctifying grace? "Commune with your own heart" upon these essential points. He that would have his face clean must look in the glass to see his spots; and he that would have his heart clean must gaze into the looking-glass of God's Word, that he may discover his secret faults. Your heart may be diseased while your cheek seems ruddy with health. Look within you, man, and be not deceived as to the fountain of your being. Have you really passed from death to life? Does the Spirit of God of a truth dwell in you? Such questions as these are all-important; I pray you answer them as before the living God, without partiality or negligence.

Think by yourself, alone, and in quiet. Oh, how I wish I could induce you to spend an hour or two closeted with yourself! "Commune with your own heart upon your bed," at that time when companions are out of the way; when the jest is silenced, and the common talk is hushed. Get by yourself, when you think of yourself, or it will be an impossible task. Choose the hour of night, when all is still around you, and darkness lends its solemnity. You can forego a little natural sleep, if

thereby you may be aroused from the sleep of spiritual death. The bed and sleep are instructive emblems of the grave and death: they may aid you in the serious work of examining your hearts. Remember that, as you put off your clothes and go to your bed, so you must put off your body and quit the scene of life's activities: are you ready for that undressing? Make your bed the place of your contrition, even as David did when he said, "All the night make I my bed to swim." The earth outside has its dews, let your heart have its tears.

Think by yourself, of yourself, and then *think for yourself.* You have been carried away by your companions; you have tried to think as they think. The general opinion of the age may have influenced you towards indifference. With a family round about you, you have looked at things too much in the light of business and personal benefit; but all this it will be wise to lay aside. As you will have to die alone, and to put in a personal appearance at the judgment-seat of Christ, it will be prudent to divest yourself of your surroundings, and "commune with your own heart." I commend this text most heartily to your immediate practice. If you are unsaved —think rather than sleep. The tendency of most men with regard to eternal things is to go to sleep, and let matters drift: I pray you do not so. I dare not let you take your rest while all is wrong with you. Sleep, if you like, in a house that is on a blaze; sleep, if you like, in a ship that is settling down, and rapidly sinking; but I charge you do not sleep while you are an unforgiven man, and your soul is nearing the eternal woe: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed": use your bed for seeking instead of sleeping. I remember the time when I dared not go to sleep, for fear I might wake

up in hell. Many when under conviction of sin have at length resolved not to sleep until they found Christ. I wish that some such feeling as that would steal over you at this moment.

Keep on thinking *till you come to be still.* "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, *and be still.*" Do you know what that means? There comes a time with men whom God is saving when all grows quiet within them. Their old pleasures and desires are hushed; the voice of the outside world is still, and they hear in the silence of their souls "the still small voice" of conscience. Oh, that you were at this moment still enough to hear that warning note! Memory also commences her rehearsals: it tells of the past, and brings forgotten things before the soul. Oh, that all of you would remember and bethink yourselves that God requireth that which is past. Best of all, God speaks in the soul. It was at night, when young Samuel was on his bed, that the Lord said to him, "Samuel, Samuel"; and it is when the heart at last has grown still that God's voice of mercy is heard calling to the man by name. Oh, that in such a case you may have grace to answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"!

I beseech you, give yourselves space for thought, before thought becomes the worm of eternal misery to you. Remember, before you hear that voice from heaven which spoke to the rich man in hell, and said to him, "Son, remember." Ye slaves of fashion and frivolity, think, I pray you! Ye serfs of daily money-grubbing, rest a while, and hear what God the Lord shall speak to you! You can hardly hear the great bell of St. Paul's when the traffic is thundering around, but it sounds solemnly in the stillness of night. We who live in the

more remote suburbs hear Big Ben of Westminster at night, but we seldom note it amid the stir and noise of the day. Do give an opportunity for the eternal voices to pierce the clamors of the hour. Do, for God's sake, and for your soul's sake, hear what wisdom teaches concerning everlasting things! O Lord, give grace to my dear hearers, that they may consider their ways, and turn unto thy statutes!

III. Very briefly, let us note that David gives a third piece of advice, which in essence means APPROACH UNTO GOD ARIGHT—"Offer the sacrifices of righteousness."

Now, I do not quite know what David himself may have intended by it, but this is how I interpret it. Come to God; come to God in his own way; come as Israel came to the Tabernacle in the wilderness, bringing their sacrifices with them.

When they brought their sacrifices, the first thing they did was to lay their hand on the victim, and *make a confession of sin.* Come, then, with broken and contrite hearts unto the Lord. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Own your shortcomings and transgressions. Do not cloak or excuse your sins. Get to your chamber, and tell the Lord what you have done. Pour out your hearts before him: turn them upside down, as it were, and let all flow out, even to the dregs. Confess your pride and unbelief your Sabbath-breaking, your dishonesty, your falsehood, your disobedience to parents, your every breach of the divine law; whatsoever you have done amiss, confess it before him and thus go to him in the only way in which he can receive you, even as sinners owning your guilt.

Go also to the Lord with gracious desires to be rid of sin. Entreat reconciliation, saying, "I would no longer

be what I have been. I throw down the weapons of my rebellion, I pluck out the plumes of my pride; O Lord, I stand before thee, guilty, and I pray thee forgive me, and then rid me of the tyrant evils which now rule me so terribly! Oh, that I may sin no more! If I have been a drunkard, help me from this day to relinquish the intoxicating cup; if I have been a swearer, wash out my mouth; may I, henceforth, speak nothing but that which will be acceptable to thee! If I have been unchaste, cleanse my mind, that I may keep my body pure!" In this way come to God with contrite hearts. How much do I long that you may draw nigh to God with true repentance and hearty resolves to conquer sin!

The main thing, however, is to bring unto the Lord *the offering which he has divinely appointed and provided.* You know what that is. There is one sacrifice of righteousness without which you cannot be accepted. Come to God by faith in Jesus Christ, plead the precious blood of atonement, and say, "My Lord, for his dear sake who died upon the tree, receive thy wanderer, and now be pleased to grant me that repentance and remission of sins which he is exalted to give." My hearers, am I talking so as to reach your hearts? If not, I do not want to talk any longer. I had far rather be silent lest I minister to your condemnation. Hearts that have forgotten your Lord till now, oh, may his Spirit constrain you to return to him this day through the sacrifice of Jesus! If you come through Christ, you will never be cast out. The father will receive any sinner that pleads the name of Jesus; and Jesus is willing that you should plead his name. He died on purpose to be the propitiation for our sins: God grant that you may accept him as such!

Come to your God: this is the great necessity of the

hour. Say, "I will arise, and go to my father." If the prodigal had said, "I will arise, and go to my brother." he would have made a great mistake, for the elder brother would have shut the door in his face. Even if his brother had been of a kinder sort, he could not have forgiven the transgressor: his father alone could do that. Come, then, to your God with earnest prayer; for it prevails with heaven. Come also with humble praise; for it is much that you are yet alive, and not yet cast into the pit. Come to your God and Father, with the resolve henceforth to render him your life's service, saying, "O Lord our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name!"

IV. I must now close with the fourth point, which is, in some respects, the most important of all: EXERCISE FAITH. When holy awe and thoughtful self-communion have led us to seek the Lord, then we are prepared for the great precept which follows. It is the command of the gospel in its Old Testament form: "Put your trust in the Lord." In whom should a man trust but in his God? It may seem reasonable to trust our fellow-creature; but, alas! man is a frail thing, and to lean upon him ensures a fall; it is, therefore, unreasonable to trust in the creature, but to rely upon the Creator is the dictate of pure reason. May God, the Holy Ghost, lead you at once to a childlike faith in our faithful God!

"Put your trust in the Lord." First, *trust him as willing to receive you*, to forgive you, to accept you, and to bless you. Are you despairing? Do you say, "There is no hope?" "Put your trust in the Lord." Are you saying, "I am without strength, and, therefere, cannot be saved?" Why not? "Put your trust in the Lord."

Does the evil one say that God will not receive you? "Put your trust in the Lord," who is infinitely gracious, and full of compassion. He saith, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Surely, you may trust in him whose mercy endureth for ever.

Especially *trust in the Lord as he reveals himself in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.* In him you see love written out in capital letters. "Put your trust in the Lord" as having provided the one sacrifice for sin, whereby he has put away for ever all the sins of those who believe in him. God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth. Believe that the precious blood can make you whiter than snow, scarlet sinner as you are. Come with that daring trust which ventures all upon the bare promise of a faithful God. Say, "I will go in unto the King, and if I perish I perish." If you do not trust in Christ, you must be lost; therefore come and try the divine way of salvation. The Lord Jesus is God's unspeakable gift, freely bestowed on all who by faith receive him. Dare to grasp what God holds out to you as the one hope of your spirit. Put your trust in the Lord, I beseech you. By his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, by his glorious resurrection and ascension, I entreat you to trust the Son of God, who has once appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Trust in the Lord, next, *that by the work of his Holy Spirit he can renew you.* The glorious Lord, who made the world out of nothing, can make something out of you yet. If you are given to anger, the Holy Spirit can make you calm and loving. If you have been defiled

with impurity, he can make you pure in heart. If you have been grovelling, he can elevate you. I may be addressing a forlorn man, who thinks that nothing can be made of him. I tell you, you have no idea what God can do with you. He can put heavenly treasure in earthen vessels. He can set you at last among the heavenly choristers, that your voice, sweeter than that of angels, may be heard amongst their everlasting symphonies. He will even here put you among the children, and set you with the princes of his people. Believe that the Holy Ghost can create you anew, can raise you from your dead condition, and can make you perfect in every good work to do his will. Put your trust in the Lord for this.

In fine, "Put your trust in the Lord" *for everything.* Poor sinner, when you begin to trust God, you will look to him mainly to put away your sin; but when that boon is received, you may go on to trust him about all your affairs. You may look to him concerning your poverty, your sickness, your bereavements, your children, your business; you may trust him for time, and trust him for eternity; trust him about little things, trust him about great things. Once under the shadow of his wings you are covered altogether; nothing is left out in the cold. To trust in God is to be your perpetual business, "For the just shall live by faith."

My closing theme is this—it has been asserted by certain of the modern school that we preach up salvation by a simple intellectual operation—salvation by merely believing a certain doctrinal statement. This is their way of stating, or mis-stating, justification by faith, which we do assuredly preach, and preach most distinctly and confidently. We are not responsible for their caricatures

of our teaching, but we would be moved thereby to be more and more explicit. As far as faith is an intellectual operation, it is simple enough; but simple faith is no trifle. Fire is a simple element, but it has a measureless power. Connected with faith there are forces of the mightiest kind for influencing character and purifying life. Faith is the surest of all sin-killers: in fact, its tendency is to extirpate sin. The moral and spiritual change which accompanies faith, and grows out of it, is of the most remarkable kind. Faith's work in the soul is something to be wondered at, and to be admired to all eternity.

For, mark, when a man believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, when he believes that Jesus so died for him that he is effectually redeemed, when he believes that the Lord Jesus has cleansed him, and that he is saved, the result upon his heart and life cannot be commonplace. So divine a persuasion operates upon his whole nature. *He is filled with adoring gratitude*, and that gratitude breeds an *intense love*, which fervent love sets itself to work for the glory of God by the purification of the soul from sin. "My Jesus died because of my sin," says the pardoned sinner, "therefore no sin shall abide in my heart. Away, O sin! Away, for ever." Some favorite sin cries, "Let me lodge within thee," but he cries, "It cannot be, for I love Jesus." Sin slew our Saviour; how can we be on friendly terms with it? We hate it with perfect hatred. Sin pleadeth, "Is it not a little one?" But the grateful heart sees great evil in a little sin, since the great Father abhors all iniquity. If the little sin was not the spear which pierced the Lord, it helped to make the thorn-crown which tore his blessed brow, and therefore away with it, away with it.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee."

Nothing creates more indignation and revenge against sin than a grateful sense of "free grace and dying love." Surely this is no mean help towards moral purification.

Faith in God is effective for the noblest ends upon the soul because *it elevates the mind.* The man who is hoping to be saved by his own works and efforts begins on earth and ends there; but the habit of looking up to God is in itself a blessing. It is something to have learned to look beyond this dunghill of fallen humanity, in which no one will ever find a pearl. It is something, I say, to wait upon God, because your expectation is from him. Trust in the sacred Trinity teaches us to be familiar with higher and better things than we can find in ourselves, or in this poor world. A hold of heaven is a help towards drawing us there. I find that those who do not put their trust in the Lord are by no means spiritual men, nor men whose conversation is in heaven; but the faith which they despise puts our foot on the ladder the top of which reaches up to God.

Faith in God *brings new ideas of God's demands.* When we do not know God, we read his law, and judge it to be harsh. "This is too strict; this is too holy. How can we obey this hard law?" But when we have faith in God, we correct our estimate, and judge that these laws of our heavenly Father are all meant for our good. He only forbids what would harm us, and he only commands what is most truly for our benefit. By faith we look upon the law as a loving directory—a chart of life's voyage showing what channel to follow and what

rock to avoid. "His commandments are not grievous." He takes from us no real pleasure, and imposes no crushing burden. To form so much better an estimate of God's law is a great moral change, is it not? Must it not greatly affect the man's behavior?

The man who puts his trust in the Lord *sees the pleasures of sin in a new light;* for he sees the evil which follows on them, by noting the agonies which they brought upon our Lord, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree. Without faith a man says to himself, "This sin is a very pleasant thing, why should I not enjoy it? Surely I may eat this fruit which looks so charming, and is so much to be desired." The flesh sees honey in the drink, but faith at once perceives that there is poison in the cup. Faith spies the snake in the grass, and gives warning of it. Faith remembers death, judgment, the great reward, the just punishment, and that dread word—eternity. Faith sees the end as well as the beginning. Faith, while the feast is going on, reminds the revellers of the reckoning. Faith feels that she cannot buy the transient joys of earth at the countless cost of an immortal soul. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Faith destroys the power of temptation. When Satan says, "You are in trouble, and here is an easy way of escape: only do a little wrong, and you will get a great good." "No," says faith, "it is God's business to get me out of my trouble, and I will not go to the devil for his aid." "Ah!" says Satan, "everybody else does so!" Faith answers, "I have to do with nobody but God, and that which is right." Ah, brethren! if Satan should offer us all the kingdoms of this world if we would

do his bidding, true faith would baffle him by saying, "What canst thou offer me? I have all these things already; for all things are mine in Christ Jesus my Lord." When faith is in its true place, covering the believer, all the wicked suggestions of the evil one are caught upon it and quenched by it, like fiery darts which fall upon a shield. We are preserved from temptation by the buckler of faith.

Moreover, faith is always attended with a new nature. That is a point never to be forgotten. No man has faith in God, of a true kind, unless he has been born again. Faith in God is one of the first indications of regeneration. Now, if you have a new and holy nature, you are no longer moved towards sinful objects as you were before. The things that you once loved you now hate, and, therefore, you will not run after them. You can hardly understand it, but so it is, that your thoughts and tastes are totally changed. You long for that very holiness which once it was irksome to hear of, and you loathe those very pursuits which were once your delight. When the Lord renews us it is not half done; it is a total and radical change. If there were no work of the Holy Spirit connected with faith, and if faith were nothing more than human assent to truth, we might be blameworthy for preaching salvation through it; but since faith leads the van in the graces of the Spirit of God, and turns the rudder of the soul, we are more and more concerned to place faith where God places it, and we say without hesitation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Remember you will thus be saved from the power of sin, and from the practice of sin, by being saved from the love of sin. O, brothers and sisters, I am not afraid to preach to you

justification by faith alone! Look to Jesus and live! I would bid the sinner come to Jesus just as he is, and take him to be his complete salvation. We do not preach to you the hope of going to heaven, and yet keeping your sins: indeed, till sin is quitted, there can be no heaven. Our Lord Jesus has opened a hospital, and into it he receives all manner of sick folk; yet he does not receive them that they may continue sick, but that he may heal them, and make them whole. He receives the sinful that he may make them holy. He saves men by changing their natures, and infusing into them a heavenly life. Come, then, ye leprous in heart, come ye to him whose touch can make you clean! Come, ye with withered limbs, incapable of holy exercise: he can, with a word, restore you! Come hither, ye blind, for he will give you sight! Yea, rise, ye dead, for he shall give you life! Repentance and remission are twin gifts which he is exalted to bestow. Come ye now to him, and receive out of his fulness!

The thought of death is constantly forced upon me by the largeness of this congregation, and the fact that there seldom passes a week but that some one among you is taken away. Soon your bodies will lie beneath the greensward, and your souls will be in the eternal state. In due time you will stand where your past will be revived; for the books shall be opened, and you will be judged out of the things which are written in those books. What a record you have written within the Book of remembrance, to be read aloud in that day! Oh, ye ungodly ones, what will you then do? Christ-rejecting sinner, how will you bear to hear those items read before the assembled world? If from this pulpit I were to read out certain incidents of your past lives, I do

not suppose you would get up to go out, for that would convict you; but you would want to go very badly. How, then, will you endure to have your sins laid bare by the hand of God, while every eye beholds them? How will you bear that shame and everlasting contempt which will be the result of your true character being blazoned abroad? How infinitely good it will be if all your past offences shall be blotted out! How joyful to be wholly absolved by the Lord of pardons! If by believing in Christ Jesus you receive a change of nature, and live a different life, and stand at the last day accepted in the Beloved, what bliss it will be! What joy will be yours when Jesus comes, when his smile shall light up the universe, and when he shall acknowledge you before the angels of God! You were with him in his humiliation, you shall be with him in his exaltation, you loved him and served him here below, you shall sit upon his throne, and reign with him for ever and ever. Ah! then, whatever little you may have suffered for his sake, will be as nothing in comparison with the exceeding weight of glory. Whatever struggling of heart and pain of soul you felt in escaping from the sin which enthralled you will be your joy when the result is seen in your eternal perfection. The bliss of beholding the face of our Beloved will be heaven enough for us. Even now I feel eager to quit this feeble body at the bare thought of being with the Bridegroom of my soul.

> "Mine eyes shall see him in that day,
> The God that died for me;
> And all my rising bones shall say,
> Lord, who is like to thee?"

May you and I behold our Redeemer when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth! Amen.

XIII.

PETER'S RESTORATION.

July 22, 1888.

"And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."—LUKE xxii. 60–62.

PETER had terribly fallen. He had denied his Master, denied him repeatedly, denied him with oaths, denied him in his presence, while his Master was being smitten and falsely charged; denied him, though he was an apostle; denied him, though he had declared that should all men forsake him, yet would he never be offended. It was a sad, sad sin. Remember what led up to it. It was, first, Peter's presumption and self-confidence. He reckoned that he could never stumble, and for that very reason he speedily fell. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. Oh, that we might look to the roots of bitter flowers, and destroy them! If presumption is flourishing in the soil of our hearts to-day, we shall soon see the evil fruit which will come of it. Reliance upon our firmness of character, depth of experience, clearness of insight, or matureness in grace, will, in the end, land us in disgraceful failure. We must either deny ourselves, or we shall deny our Lord: if we cleave to self-confidence, we shall not cleave to him.

Immediately, Peter's denial was owing to cowardice.

The brave Peter in the presence of a maid was ashamed; he could not bear to be pointed out as a follower of the Galilean. He did not know what might follow upon it; but he saw his Lord without a friend, and felt that it was a lost cause, and he did not care to avow it. Only to think that Peter, under temporary discouragement, should play the coward! Yet cowardice treads upon the heels of boasting; he that thinks he can fight the world will be the first man to run away.

His sin also arose from his want of watchfulness. His Master had said to him, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" and no doubt there was more meaning in the words than appeared on the surface. The Lord several times said to him, "Pray, that ye enter not into temptation." The words were repeated with deep impressiveness, for they were greatly needed. But Peter had not watched: he had been warming his hands. He did not pray: he felt too strong in himself to be driven to special prayer. Therefore, when the gusts of temptation came, they found Peter's boat unprepared for the storm, and they drove it upon a rock.

When Peter first denied his Master a cock crew. Peter must have heard that crowing, or he would not have communicated the fact to the evangelists who recorded it. But though he heard it, he was an example of those who have ears but hear not. One would have thought that the warning would have touched his conscience; but it did not; and when the cock crowed a second time, after he had committed three denials, it might not have awakened him from his dreadful sleep if a higher instrumentality had not been used, namely, a look from the Lord Jesus.

God keep us free from this spirit of slumber, for it is

to the last degree dangerous! Peter was under the direful influence of Satan, for it was a night wherein the powers of darkness were specially active. "This is your hour," said Jesus, "and the power of darkness." That same influence which assailed the Saviour unsuccessfully —for, said he, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"—assailed Peter with sad result; for the evil one had something in Peter, and he soon found it out. The sparks from Satan's flint and steel fell upon our Lord as upon water; but Peter's heart was like a tinder-box; and when the sparks fell, they found fuel there. Oh, that we may be kept from the assaults of Satan! "Lead us not into temptation" is a necessary prayer; but the next petition is specially noteworthy— "but deliver us from the evil one." A man never gets anything out of the devil, even if he conquers him. You will find in combat with him that, even if you win the victory, you come off with gashes and wounds of which you will carry the scars to your grave. "All the while," says Mr. Bunyan, while Christian was fighting with Apollyon, "I did note that he did not so much as give one smile." Oh no! there is nothing to smile about when the arch-enemy is upon us. He is such a master of the cruel art of soul-wounding that every stroke tells. He knows our weak places in the present, he brings to remembrance our errors in the past, and he paints in blackest colors the miseries of the future, and so seeks to destroy our faith. All his darts are fiery ones. It takes all a man's strength, and a great deal more, to ward off his cunning and cruel cuts. The worst of it is that, as in Peter's case, he casts a spell over men, so that they do not fight at all, but yield themselves an easy prey. Our Saviour said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan

hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Peter was as much under the power of Satan as corn is in the hand of the man who winnows it. He went up and down in that sieve like a helpless thing, and so passed from simple falsehood to plain denials of his Master with oaths and cursings.

I desire in this discourse to speak chiefly of Peter's restoration. Peter was down; but he was soon up again. One writer says the story should rather be called Peter's restoration than Peter's fall. His fall was soon over: he was like a little child learning to walk, scarcely down before his mother has him up again. It was not a continuance in sin, like that of David, who remained for months without repentance; but it was the quick speech of a man carried away by sudden temptation, and it was followed by a speedy repentance. Upon his restoration we are going to meditate.

It was brought about by two outward means. I like to think of the singular combination: the crowing of the cock, and a look from the Lord. When I come to preach to you, it almost makes me smile to think that God should save a soul through me. I may find a fit image of myself in the poor cock. Mine is poor crowing. But as the Master's look went with the cock's crowing, so, I trust, it will go with my feeble preaching. The next time you also go out to try and win a soul for Jesus, say to yourself, "I cannot do it: I cannot melt a hard, rebellious heart; but yet the Lord may use me; and if there come a happy conjunction of my feeble words with my Lord's potent look, then the heart will dissolve in streams of repentance." Crow away, poor bird: if Jesus looks whilst thou art crowing, thou wilt

not crow in vain, but Peter's heart will break. The two things are joined together, and let no man put them asunder—the commonplace instrumentality and the divine Worker. Christ has all the glory, and all the more glory because he works by humble means. I trust that there will be this morning a conjunction of the weakness of the preacher with the strength of the Holy Spirit; so that stony hearts may be broken and God glorified.

This morning, first, *let us look at the Lord who looked;* and secondly, *let us look into the look which the Lord looked;* and then, thirdly, *let us look at Peter, upon whom the Lord looked.* We will be all the while looking: may our Lord look upon us. May his Holy Spirit work with his holy word!

I. First, LET US LOOK AT THE LORD WHO LOOKED UPON PETER.

Can you picture him up there in the hall, up yonder steps, before the high priest and the council? Peter is down below in the area of the house warming his hands at the fire. Can you see the Lord Jesus turning round and fixing his eyes intently upon his erring disciple? What see you in that look?

I see in that look, first, that which makes me exclaim: *What thoughtful love!* Jesus is bound, he is accused, he has just been smitten on the face, but his thought is of wandering Peter. You want all your wits about you when you are before cruel judges, and are called upon to answer false charges; you are the more tried when there is no man to stand by you, or bear witness on your behalf: it is natural, at such an hour, that all your thoughts should be engaged with your own cares and sorrows. It would have been no reproach had the

thoughts of our Lord been concentrated on his personal sufferings; and all the less so because these were for the sake of others. But our blessed Master is thinking of Peter, and his heart is going out toward his unworthy disciple. That same influence which made his heart drive out its store of blood through every pore of his body in the bloody sweat, now acted upon his soul, and drove his thoughts outward towards that member of his mystical body which was most in danger. Peter was thought of when the Redeemer was standing to be mocked and reviled. Blessed be his dear name, Jesus always has an eye for his people, whether he be in his shame or in his glory. Jesus always has an eye for those for whom he shed his blood. Though now he reigns in glory, he still looks steadily upon his own: his delight is in them, and his care is over them. There was not a particle of selfishness about our Saviour. "He saved others; himself he could not save." He looked to others, but he never looked to himself I see, then, in our Lord's looking upon Peter, a wondrously thoughtful love.

I exclaim, next, *What a boundless condescension!* If our Lord's eye had wandered that day upon "that other disciple" that was known to the high priest, or if he had even looked upon some of the servants of the house, we should not have been so astonished; but when Jesus turns, it is to look upon Peter, the man from whom we should naturally have turned away our faces, after his wretched conduct. He had acted most shamefully and cruelly, and yet the Master's eye sought him out in boundless pity! If there is a man here who feels himself to be near akin to the devil, I pray the Lord to look first at him. If you feel as if you had sinned yourself out of the pale of humanity, by having cast off all good

things, and by having denied the Lord that bought you, yet still consider the amazing mercy of the Lord. If you are one of his, his pitying eye will find you out; for even now it follows you as it did Hagar, when she cried, "Thou God seest me." But oh, the compassion of that look! When first I understood that the Lord looked on me with love in the midst of my sin, it did seem so wonderful! He whom the heavens adore, before whose sight the whole universe is stretched out as on a map, yet passes by all the glories of heaven that he may fix his tender gaze upon a wandering sheep, and may in great mercy bring it back again to the fold. For the Lord of glory to look upon a disciple who denies him is boundless condescension!

But then, again, *what tender wisdom do I see here!* "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." He knew best what to do: he did not speak to him, but looked upon him. He had spoken to Peter before, and that voice had called him to be a fisher of men: he had given Peter his hand before, and saved him from a watery grave when he was beginning to sink. But this time he gives him neither his voice nor his hand, but that which was equally effectual, and intensely suitable, he lent him his eye: "The Lord looked upon Peter." How wisely does Christ always choose the way of expressing his affection, and working our good! If he had spoken to Peter then, the mob would have assailed him, or at least the ribald crowd would have remarked upon the sorrow of the Master, and the treachery of the disciple: our gracious Lord will never needlessly expose the faults of his chosen. Possibly no words could have expressed all that was thrown into that look of compassion. Why, brethren, a volume as big as the Bible is contained with-

in that look of Jesus. I defy all the tongues and all the pens in the world to tell us all that our divine Lord meant by that look. Our Saviour employed the most prudent, the most comprehensive, the most useful method of speaking to the heart of his erring follower. He looked volumes into him. His glance was a divine hieroglyphic full of unutterable meanings, which it conveyed in a more clear and vivid way than words could have done.

As I think of that look again, I am compelled to cry out: *What divine power is here!* Why, dear friends, this look worked wonders. I sometimes preach with all my soul to Peter, and, alas! he likes my sermon and forgets it. I have known Peter read a good book full of most powerful pleading, and when he has read it through, he has shut it up and gone to sleep. I remember my Peter when he lost his wife, and one would have thought it would have touched him, and it did, with some natural feeling; yet he did not return to the Lord, whom he had forsaken, but continued in his backsliding. See, then, how our Lord can do with a look what we cannot do with a sermon, what the most powerful writer cannot do with hundreds of pages, and what affliction cannot do with even its heaviest stroke. The Lord looked, and Peter wept bitterly. I cannot help thinking with Isaac Williams that there is a majestic simplicity in the expression here used—"The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." The passage reminds us of that first of Genesis: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." As the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians, and troubled the Egyptians, so did he now look into Peter's heart, and his thoughts troubled him. Oh, the power of the Lord

Christ! If there was this power about him when he was bound before his accusers, what is his power now that he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God, by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them? In that look there was divinity. The Son of God looked upon Peter: the text does not use the name Jesus, but it expressly says, "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter." That divine look did the deed.

Let me beg you to note *what sacred teaching is here.* The teaching is of practical value, and should be at once carried out by the followers of Jesus. You, dear friend, are a Christian man or a Christian woman; you have been kept, by divine grace, from anything like disgraceful sin. Thank God it is so. I dare say, if you look within, you will find much to be ashamed of; but yet you have been kept from presumptuous and open sins! Alas! one who was once a friend of yours has disgraced himself: he was a little while ago a member of the church, but he has shamefully turned aside. You cannot excuse his sin; on the contrary, you are forced to feel great indignation against his folly, his untruthfulness, his wickedness. He has caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, and has done awful mischief to the cause of righteousness. Now I know what will be suggested to you. You will be inclined to cut his acquaintance, to disown him altogether, and scarcely to look at him if you meet him in the street. This is the manner of men, but not the manner of Jesus. I charge you, act not in so un-Christlike a manner. The Lord turned, and looked on Peter; will not his servants look on him? You are not perfect like your Lord; you are only a poor sinful creature like your fallen brother. What! are you too proud

to look at the fallen one? Will you not give him a helping hand? Will you not try to bring him back? The worst thing you can do with a backslider is to let him keep on sliding back. Your duty should be your pleasure, and your duty is to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, remembering thyself also, lest thou also be tempted." O brothers and sisters, it is a very little thing that has kept some of us from turning aside unto folly. One grain more and the scale would have turned in favor of a great fall. Our steps have well-nigh slipped. When we are proud of our sure standing, the Lord may well be angry with us for our vanity, and he may justly say, "How can I endure this pride? I have taken great care of this man, and watched over him to keep him out of sin, and now he takes the credit of it all, and plays the great man, and fancies that he will be defiled if he associates with my poor wandering children." Which, think you, is worse in God's sight, the sudden fall into sin, or the long-continued pride, which boasts itself in the presence of the Lord, and looks contemptuously upon erring ones? It is not my office to become a measurer of sins; but I would earnestly enforce this plain duty: since our own Lord and Master looked on backsliding Peter, let us seek out our wandering brethren.

One more lesson: observe *what heavenly comfort is here:* "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter"; yes Jesus looks upon sinners still. The doctrine of God's omniscience is far oftener set forth in a hard way than in a cheering way. Have you never heard a sermon from "Thou God seest me," of which the pith was—Therefore tremble, and be afraid? That is hardly fair to the text; for when Hagar cried, "Thou God seest me," it was

because the Lord had interposed to help her, when she had fled from her mistress. It was comfort to her that there she also had looked after him that had looked upon her. There is a dark side to "Thou God seest me"; but it is not half so dark as it would be if God did not see us. It is true, O sinner, that God has seen your sin, and all the aggravations of it; but it is also true that as he sees your ruin, your misery, your sadness, he has compassion on you. He sees your sin that he may remove it, and make you clean in his sight. As the Lord looked upon Peter, so he looks upon you. He has not turned his back on you; he has not averted the gaze of his pity. He sees to the bottom of your heart, and reads all your thoughts. You have not to go about to find out God—he is looking upon you. "He is not far from every one of us"; he is within eyesight. You are to look to him; and if you do, your eyes will meet his eyes, for already he looks upon you.

I think we have gathered much from this brief look at the Lord who looked upon Peter. I doubt not that had we more time and more insight, we should see greater things than these.

II. Now let us go on to the second point, and see whether we cannot gather still more instruction. LET US LOOK INTO THE LOOK WHICH THE LORD GAVE TO PETER. Help us again, most gracious Spirit!

That look was, first of all, *a marvellous refreshment to Peter's memory.* "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." What a sight it must have been for Peter! Our dear Master's face was that night all red from the bloody sweat. He must have appeared emaciated in body: his eyes weary with want of sleep, and his whole countenance the vision of grief. If ever a picture of the

Man of Sorrows could have been drawn, it should have been taken at that moment when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. By torchlight and the flickering flame of the fire in the court of the hall of Caiaphas Peter saw a vision which would never fade from his mind. He saw the man whom he loved as he had never seen him before. This was he who called him, when he was fishing, to become a fisher of men; this was he who bade him spread the net, and caused him to take an incredible quantity of fishes, insomuch that the boat began to sink, and he cried out, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" this was he who had made him walk on the water, and at other times had rebuked the winds, and raised the dead. This was he with whom Peter had been upon the mount of transfiguration! Truly there was a wonderful change from the glistening whiteness of the mount to the ghastliness of that sad hour! Though the lineaments of that reverend face were distained with blood, yet Peter could tell that it was the selfsame Lord with whom he had enjoyed three years of intimate intercourse and tender unveiling. All this must in a moment have flashed upon poor Peter's mind; and I do not wonder that in the recollection of it all he went out and wept bitterly. He did love his Lord; his denial was not of the heart, but of the tongue; and therefore as all the grounds of his faith came before his mind anew, his heart was broken into a thousand pieces with grief that he should have been false to such a friend. Yes, that look awoke a thousand slumbering memories, and all these called upon the sincere heart of Peter to repent of its ungenerous weakness.

Next, that turning of the Master was *a special reminder of his warning words.* Jesus did not say it in words, but

he did more than say it by his look. "Ah, Peter! did not I tell you it would be so? You said, 'Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.' Did I not tell thee that before cock-crowing thou wouldst deny me thrice?" No rebuke was uttered; and yet the tender eye of the Lord had revealed to Peter his own extreme folly, and his Master's superior wisdom. Now he saw his own character, and perceived his Lord's discernment. It was a prophecy, and, like all other prophecies, it was understood after it was fulfilled. We read that "Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." It is clear, then, that our Lord's look was a special reminder of his former words: it stirred up Peter's mind by way of remembrance, and made him see how foolish he had been, and how inexcusable was his fault.

Surely it was, also, *a moving appeal to Peter's heart.* I bade you notice just now, in the reading of the chapter, that this story of Peter is singularly interwoven into the narrative of our Saviour's passion: it is so interwoven because it constitutes an essential part of that passion. We must not regard it as an accidental incident, it was part and parcel of that grief which he had to bear when he stood in our place and stead. It was written of old, "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered;" and this scattering of the sheep, of which Peter was a notable instance, was one of the bitter ingredients of our Redeemer's mental anguish. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me" is his complaint in the Psalm. When the Saviour showed himself to Peter with all those lines of grief upon his face, he seemed to say to him, "Canst thou deny me now? I am bound for thee, and

dost thou deny me? I stand here to be adjudged to death for thee, and dost thou deny me? Now is the hour of mine agony, and dost thou deny me?" The Lord could not have looked at Peter without creating strong emotion in the breast of the weak disciple who now found himself in so sad a plight. That look touched very tender chords. There was no need for a single word of appeal: that look sufficed to stir the deeps of Peter's nature.

What do you think that look chiefly said? My thought about it, as I turned it over, was this: when the Lord looked upon Peter, though he did refresh his memory, and make an appeal to his conscience, yet there was still more evidently *a glorious manifestation of love.* If I may be permitted humbly and reverently to read what was written on my Master's face, I think it was this: "And yet I love thee, Peter, I love thee still! Thou hast denied me, but I look upon thee still as mine. I cannot give thee up. I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and, notwithstanding all thine ill-conduct towards me, I am looking for thee, and expecting to receive thee. I have not turned my back on thee. Behold, I look towards thee with tender regard, foreseeing that thou wilt yet serve me, and prove the truth of thy devotion to me. Despair not, O Peter, for I will receive thee again, and thou shalt glorify me." Judging what would break my heart the soonest if I had thus denied my Master, it seems to me that I should be most affected by his saying to me, "And yet, despite thy sin, I love thee still." Love is the great heart-breaker. Immutable love is that divine hammer which breaks the rock in pieces. Though a man should have sinned himself into great hardness of heart, yet almighty love can soften him. Who can resist the

charms of grace unchangeable? Sharper than a sword is a look of love: more fierce than coals of juniper are the flames of love. One said, the other day, speaking of a person who has gone awfully astray after having been a preacher of the Word, "If I did not believe in the doctrine of unchanging love I do not think I dare pray for him; but since I believe that God will bring him back again, I pray with humble confidence that he will be restored." That which is an encouragement to prayer for others will be a help towards our return if we have gone astray. I love to believe that my Lord will bring his wanderers back. O ye who are anxious to return to him, let this cheer you—"Yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." This doctrine wins men back. There are wicked men who turn it into an argument for continuing in sin; but their damnation is just. True men will see, in the measureless and unchanging love of Christ, a reason which will put wings to their feet when they hasten back to him from whom they have gone astray.

Again: this look *penetrated Peter's inmost heart.* It is not every look that we receive that goes very deep. I look with eyes of deep affection at men from this pulpit, and I perceive that they know my meaning; but they soon shake it off. But our Saviour has an eye to which the joints and marrow are visible. He looks into the secret chambers of the soul; for his look is a sunbeam, and bears its own light with it, lighting up the dark places of our nature by its own radiance. Peter could not help feeling, for he was pricked in the heart by the arrow of Christ's glance. How many persons are affected by religion only in the head! It does not affect their heart and life. I am grieved when I hear of some of you,

who are regular hearers, and take pleasure in my preaching, and yet, after many years, you are not a bit better. You have had spasms of improvement, but they have ended in nothing. You go back to the mire after you have been washed. You are a hearer of the gospel, and yet a drunkard. Your voice is heard in a psalm, but it may also be heard in an oath. It is a shocking thing; but I have done my best. I can preach to your ears, but I cannot look into your hearts. Oh, that my Lord would give such a glance at you this morning as should dart light into you, and cause you to see yourself, and to see him, and then the tears would fill your eyes!

One fact may not escape our notice: our Lord's look at Peter was *a revival of all Peter's looking unto Jesus.* The Lord's look upon Peter took effect because Peter was looking to the Lord. Do you catch it? If the Lord had turned and looked on Peter, and Peter's back had been turned on the Lord, that look would not have reached Peter, nor affected him. The eyes met to produce the desired result. Notwithstanding all Peter's wanderings, he was anxious about his Lord, and therefore looked to see what was done with him. Even while he warmed his hands at the fire, he kept looking into the inner hall. His eyes were constantly looking in the direction of the Lord Jesus. While he wandered about among the maids and serving-men, and got talking to them, fool that he was; yet still he would perpetually steal a glance that way to see how it fared with the man he loved. He had not given up the habit of looking to his Lord. If he had not still, in a measure, looked to his Master, how would the look of Jesus have been observed by him? His eye must look through your eye

to get to your heart. The remainders of faith are the sparks among the ashes of piety, and the Lord blows on these to raise a fire. If there is a poor soul here that, despite his backsliding, can yet feel, "I am trusting in Jesus, and if I perish, I will perish there," there is hope for that soul. If you have given up the outward forms of religion it is a grievous fault: but if you still inwardly look to the Crucified, there is something in you to work upon; there is an eye which can receive the look of Jesus. It is through the eye that looks to Jesus that Jesus looks, and lets fresh light and hope into the soul. Oh that you who have this lingering faith in the Lord may now receive a look from him which shall work in you a bitter, salutary, saving repentance, without which you can never be restored?

This look was altogether between the Lord and Peter. Nobody knew that the Lord looked on Peter, except Peter and his Lord. That grace which saves a soul is not a noisy thing; neither is it visible to any but the receiver. This morning, if the grace of God comes to any one of you in power, it will be unperceived by those who sit on either side of you in the pew: they will hear the same words, but of the divine operation which accompanies them they will know nothing: the eye of the Lord will not speak to them as it is speaking to the awakened one. Do you know anything of the secret love-look of the Lord Jesus?

The whole process may not have occupied more than a second of time. "The Lord turned, and looked on Peter." It took less time to do than it takes to tell. Yet in that instant an endless work was done. How soon can Jesus change the heart! "He spake and it was done:" I venture to alter that verse, and say, "He

looked, and it was done." Lord, look on sinful Peter now! Work a miracle with thine eye! Even here, let some sinner look to thee because thou hast looked on him.

III. Now I must go to my third point: LET US LOOK AT PETER AFTER THE LORD HAD LOOKED AT HIM. What is Peter doing? When the Lord looked on Peter *the first thing Peter did was to feel awakened.* Peter's mind had been sleeping. The charcoal fire had not done him much good, the fumes of it are evil. The dust of Satan's sieve had got into his eyes. He was confused with very sorrow for his dear Master, whom he truly loved. Peter was hardly Peter that night. I think I had better say, Peter was too much Peter, and his mind had more of Peter's stone in it, than of Christ's flesh. He had forgotten that he was an apostle; he had forgotten that which he had declared when the Lord said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." Again I remind you how significantly it is written, "*The Lord* turned, and looked upon Peter"; for it hints that Peter now saw his Lord's Deity through the veil of his humiliation and anguish. He had forgotten his Lord's Deity, and thus he had, in thought, denied his Lord. He was off the lines, and was in a sleepy state. He was what Paul calls "bewitched" and under the influence of a spiritual soporific, administered by Satan. The Lord's look brought him to his better self, and aroused all the spiritual life which had been dormant in him: "Peter remembered," and by this remembrance he was restored.

The next effect was, *it took away all Peter's foolhardiness from him.* Peter had made his way into the high priest's hall, but now he made his way out of it. He

had not felt in any danger though in the worst of company. What did he care for the girl that kept the door? Surely he was too much of a man to mind her remarks. What did he care for the men that were round the fire? They were rough fellows, but he had been a fisherman, and quite able to cope with the priest's bailiffs. But now the brag is gone out of him. No sooner had Jesus looked upon him than Peter declined all further risks.

Now he shows the better part of valor, and with great discretion quits the dangerous society of the high priest's palace. Revival of grace in the heart is the death of presumption. The man who runs risks with his soul is not in a right state of mind. Perhaps the Saviour's glance conveyed a hint to Peter that he had no business where he was. It may have seemed to say to him, "You had better be gone from these surroundings." At any rate, that was the effect it produced. That palace in which the Lord fared so badly could not be a fit place for a disciple. To be warming himself at the fire was quite inconsistent for Peter while Jesus was being mocked of his enemies. A sight of the Lord Jesus makes many things seem incongruous which else might appear right enough. All Peter's daring vanished; he turned his back on maids and men, and went out into the darkness of the night. We do not hear of his coming near the cross: in fact, we hear no more of him till the resurrection morning, for Peter was sensible enough to feel that he could not trust himself any more. He placed himself in the background, till his Lord summoned him to the front. I wish that some religious professors whose lives have been questionable had grace enough to do the same. When I see a man who has sinned grievously pushing himself speedily to

the front, I cannot believe that he has a due sense of the evil he has wrought, or of his own unfitness to be in the place of peril.

Above all, shun the place where you have fallen. Do not linger in it for a moment. Go out, even though you leave a comfortable fire behind you. Better be in the cold than stay where your soul is in danger. Till Peter had received from the Lord's own mouth abundant assurance of his restoration to his office by the threefold charge to feed the sheep and lambs, we do not find him again in the forefront.

That look of Christ *severed Peter from the crowd.* He was no longer among the fellows around the fire. He had not another word to say to them: he quitted their company in haste. It is well for believers to feel that they are not of the world! They should flee out of Sodom. The Lord has severed us from the multitude by his divine choice, and the separation should be our choice.

Oh, that the arrows of the great Lord would this morning pierce some soul even as a huntsman wounds a stag! Oh, that the wounded soul, like Peter, would *seek solitude!* The stag seeks the thicket to bleed and die alone; but the Lord will come in secret to the wounded heart, and draw out the arrow. Alone is the place for a penitent. Out in the darkness is far better for you than around the fire, where coarse jokes are bandied while Christ is mocked. There must be confession and weeping alone. If Christ has looked upon you, you must get away from the men of the world, and indeed from all others; the solitude of your chamber will suit you best.

That look of Christ also *opened the sluices of Peter's heart:* he went out, and wept bitterly. There was gall in the tears he wept, for they were the washings of his

bitter sorrow. Dear friends, if we have sinned with Peter, God grant us grace to weep with Peter. Many will think of Peter's wandering who forget Peter's weeping. Sin, even though it be forgiven, is a bitter thing; even though Christ may look away your despair he will not look away your penitence. "He went out, and wept bitterly." Oh, how he chided himself! "How could I have acted so!" How he smote on his breast, and sighed, "How can I ever look up? Yet is he very precious. That look forgave me; but I can never forgive myself." He remembered it all his life, and could never hear a cock crow without feeling the water in his eyes.

Yet I want you to notice that that look of Christ *gave him relief.* It is a good thing to be able to weep. Those who cannot weep are the people who suffer most. A pent-up sorrow is a terrible sorrow. The Lord touched a secret spring, and made Peter's grief flow out in floods. and that must have greatly eased him. I have frequently heard people say, "I had a good cry, and after that I was able to bear it." People die of bursting hearts when no tears relieve them. I thank God for Peter that he could weep bitterly, for thus the Holy Spirit came to him with comfort. O Master, look on some poor dry heart here—some poor heart that cannot feel its sinfulness, but would if it could—and give it feeling! Look on the heart which cannot repent, that is crying "I would, but cannot feel contrition." Lord, thou didst make the rock yield water at the smiting of the rod, use thy poor stick of a servant this morning to smite the rocky heart, and let the waters of repentance flow out.

And now, to conclude, it *made Peter*, as long as he lived, *ashamed to be ashamed.* Peter was never ashamed

after this. Who was it that stood up at Pentecost and preached? Was it not Peter? Was he not always foremost in testifying to his Lord and Master? I trust that if any of us have been falling back, and especially if we have wandered into sin, we may get such a restoration from the Lord himself, that we may become better Christians ever afterwards. I do not want you to break a bone, I pray God you never may; but if you ever do, may the heavenly Surgeon so set it that it may become thicker and stronger than before. Courage was the bone in Peter which snapped; but when it was set, it became the strongest bone in his nature, and never broke again. When the Lord sets the bones of his people, they never break any more—he does his work so effectually. The man who has erred by anger becomes meek and gentle. The man who has erred by drink, quits the deadly cup, and loathes it. The man who has sinned by shame becomes the bravest of the company.

O, Lord Jesus, I have tried to preach thee this morning, but I cannot look with thine eye. Thou must look on erring ones thyself. Look, Saviour! Look, sinner! "There is life in a look AT the crucified One," because there is life in a look *from* the crucified One. May Jesus look, and the sinner look! Amen.

XIV.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, THE CONQUERING WEAPON.

September 9, 1888.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."—REVELATION xii. 11.

WHEREVER evil appears, it is to be fought with by the children of God in the name of Jesus, and in the power of the Holy Ghost. When evil appeared in an angel, straightway there was war in heaven. Evil in mortal men is to be striven against by all regenerate men. If sin comes to us in the form of an angel of light we must still war with it. If it comes with all manner of deceivableness of unrighteousness, we must not parley for a single moment, but begin the battle forthwith, if indeed we belong to armies of the Lord. Evil is at its very worst in Satan himself: with him we fight. He is no mean adversary. The evil spirits which are under his control are, any one of them, terrible foes; but when Satan himself personally attacks a Christian, any one of us will be hard put to it.

When this dragon blocks our road, we shall need heavenly aid to force our passage. A pitched battle with Apollyon may not often occur; but when it does, you will know it painfully: you will record it in your diary as one of the darkest days you have ever lived; and you will eternally praise your God, when you overcome

him. But even if Satan were ten times stronger and more crafty than he is, we are bound to wrestle with him: we cannot for a moment hesitate, or offer him terms. Evil in its highest, strongest, and proudest form is to be assailed by the soldier of the cross, and nothing must end the war but complete victory. Satan is *the* enemy, the enemy of enemies. That prayer of our Lord's, which we usually render, "Deliver us from evil," has the special significance of "Deliver us from the evil one"; because he is the chief embodiment of evil, and in him evil is intensified, and has come to its highest strength. That man had need have Omnipotence with him who hopes to overcome the enemy of God and man. He would destroy all godly ones if he could; and though he cannot, such is his inveterate hate, that he worries those whom he cannot devour with a malicious eagerness.

In this chapter the devil is called the "great red dragon." He is great in capacity, intelligence, energy, and experience. Whether or not he was the chief of all angels before he fell I do not know. Some have thought that he was such, and that when he heard that a man was to sit upon the throne of God, out of very jealousy, he rebelled against the Most High. This also is conjecture. But we do know that he was and is an exceedingly great spirit as compared with us. He is a being great in evil: the prince of darkness, having the power of death. He shows his malice against the saints by accusing the brethren day and night before God. In the prophets we have the record of Satan standing to accuse Joshua the servant of God. Satan also accused Job of serving God from mercenary motives: "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?"

This ever active enemy desires to tempt as well as ac-

cuse: he would have us, and sift us as wheat. In calling him the dragon, the Holy Spirit seems to hint at his mysterious power and character. To us a spirit such as he is must ever be a mystery in his being and working. Satan is a mysterious personage, though he is not a mythical one. We can never doubt his existence if we have once come into conflict with him; yet he is to us all the more real because so mysterious. If he were flesh and blood it would be far easier to contend with him; but to fight with this spiritual wickedness in high places is a terrible task. As a dragon he is full of cunning and ferocity. In him force is allied with craft; and if he cannot achieve his purpose at once by power he waits his time. He deludes, he deceives; in fact, he is said to deceive the whole world. What a power of deception must reside in him, when under his influence the third part of the stars of heaven are made to fall, and myriads of men in all ages have worshipped demons and idols! He has steeped the minds of men in delusion, so that they cannot see that they should worship none but God, their Maker. He is styled "the old serpent"; and this reminds us how practised he is in every evil art. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies. After thousands of years of constant practice in deception he is much too cunning for us. If we think that we can match him by craft we are grievous fools, for he knows vastly more than the wisest of mortals; and if it once comes to a game of policies, he will certainly clear the board, and sweep our tricks into the bag. To this cunning he adds great speed, so that he is quick to assail at any moment, darting down upon us like a hawk upon a poor chick. He is not everywhere present; but it is hard to say where he is not. He cannot be omnipresent;

but yet, by that majestic craft of his, he so manages his armies of fallen ones that, like a great general, he superintends the whole field of battle, and seems present at every point. No door can shut him out, no height of piety can rise beyond his reach. He meets us in all our weaknesses, and assails us from every point of the compass. He comes upon us unaware, and gives us wounds which are not easily healed.

But yet, dear friends, powerful as this infernal spirit certainly must be, his power is defeated when we are resolved never to be at peace with him. We must never dream of terms or truce with evil. To suppose that we can let him alone, and all will be well, is a deadly error. We must fight or perish: evil will slay us if we do not slay it. Our only safety will lie in a determined, vigorous opposition to sin, whatever shape it assumes, whatever it may threaten, whatever it may promise. The Holy Ghost alone can maintain in us this enmity to sin.

According to the text it is said of the saints, "They overcame him." We are never to rest until it is said of us also, "They overcame him." He is a foeman worthy of your steel. Do you refuse the conflict? Do you think of turning back? You have no armor for your back. To cease to fight is to be overcome. You have your choice between the two, either to gird up the loins of your minds for a life-long resistance, or else to be Satan's slaves forever. I pray God that you may awake, arise, and give battle to the foe. Resolve once for all that by the grace of God you will be numbered with those who overcome the arch-enemy.

Our text brings before us a very important subject for consideration:—*What is the conquering weapon?* With what sword did they fight who have overcome the

great red dragon? Listen! "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." Secondly, *how do we use that weapon?* We do as they did who overcame "by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

I. First, WHAT IS THIS CONQUERING WEAPON? They overcame him by "the blood of the Lamb."

The blood of the Lamb signifies, first, *the death of the Son of God.* The suffering of Jesus Christ might be set forth by some other figure, but his death on the cross requires the mention of blood. Our Lord was not only bruised and smitten, but he was put to death. His heart's blood was made to flow. He of whom we speak was God over all, blessed for ever; but he condescended to take our manhood into union with his Godhead in a mysterious manner. He was born at Bethlehem a babe, he grew as a child, he ripened into manhood, and lived here among us, eating and drinking, suffering and rejoicing, sleeping and laboring as men do. He died in very deed and of a truth, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. That death was the grand fact which is set forth by the words "the blood of the Lamb." We are to view Jesus as the Lamb of God's passover: not merely separated from others, dedicated to be Israel's memorial, and consecrated to divine service, but as the Lamb *slain.* Remember, that Christ viewed as living, and not as having died, is not a saving Christ. He himself saith, "I am he that liveth *and was dead.*" The moderns cry, "Why not preach more about his life, and less about his death?" I reply, Preach his life as much as you will, but never apart from his death; for it is by his blood that we are redeemed. "We preach Christ." Complete the sentence. "We preach Christ *crucified,*"

says the apostle. Ah, yes! there is the point. It is the death of the Son of God which is the conquering weapon. Had he not poured forth his soul unto death, even to the death of the cross—had he not been numbered with the transgressors, and put to a death of shame—we should have had no weapon with which to overcome the dragon prince. By "the blood of the Lamb" we understand the death of the Son of God. Hear it, O men! Because you have sinned, Jesus dies that you may be cleared from your sin. "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," and died that he might redeem us from all unrighteousness. The point is his death, and, paradoxically, this death is the vital point of the gospel. The death of Christ is the death of sin and the defeat of Satan, and hence it is the life of our hope and the assurance of his victory. Because he poured out his soul unto the death, he divides the spoil with the strong.

Next, by "the blood of the Lamb" we understand *our Lord's death as a substitutionary sacrifice.* Let us be very clear here. It is not said that they overcame the arch-enemy by the blood of Jesus, or the blood of Christ, but by the blood *of the Lamb;* and the words are expressly chosen because, under the figure of a lamb, we have set before us a sacrifice. The blood of Jesus Christ, shed because of his courage for the truth, or out of pure philanthropy, or out of self-denial, conveys no special gospel to men, and has no peculiar power about it. Truly it is an example worthy to beget martyrs; but it is not the way of salvation for guilty men. If you proclaim the death of the Son of God, but do not show that he died the just for the unjust to bring us to God, you have not preached the blood of the Lamb. You must make it known that "the chastisement of our peace was

upon him," and that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or you have not declared the meaning of the blood of the Lamb. There is no overcoming sin without a substitutionary sacrifice. The lamb under the old law was brought by the offender to make atonement for his offence, and in his place it was slain: this was the type of Christ taking the sinner's place, bearing the sinner's sin, and suffering in the sinner's stead, and thus vindicating the justice of God, and making it possible for him to be just and the justifier of him that believeth. I understand this to be the conquering weapon—the death of the Son of God set forth as the propitiation for sin. Sin must be punished: it is punished in Christ's death. Here is the hope of men.

Futhermore, I understand by the expression, "The blood of the Lamb," that *our Lord's death was effected for the taking away of sin.* When John the Baptist first pointed to Jesus, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Our Lord Jesus has actually taken away sin by his death. Beloved, we are sure that he had offered an acceptable. and effectual propitiation when he said, "It is finished." Either he did put away sin, or he did not. If he did not, how will it ever be put away? If he did, then are believers clear. Altogether apart from anything that we do or are, our glorious Substitute took away our sin, as in the type the scape-goat carried thesin of Israel into the wilderness. In the case of all those for whom our Lord offered himself as a substitutionary sacrifice, the justice of God finds no hindrance to its fullest flow: it is consistent with justice that God should bless the redeemed. Near nineteen hundred years ago Jesus paid the dreadful debt of all his elect, and

made a full atonement for the whole mass of the iniquities of them that shall believe in him, thereby removing the whole tremendous load, and casting it by one lift of his pierced hand into the depths of the sea. When Jesus died, an atonement was offered by him and accepted by the Lord God, so that before the high court of heaven there was a distinct removal of sin from the whole body of which Christ is the head. In the fulness of time each redeemed one individually accepts for himself the great atonement by an act of personal faith, but the atonement itself was made long before. I believe this to be one of the edges of the conquering weapon. We are to preach that the Son of God has come in the flesh and died for human sin, and that in dying he did not only make it possible for God to forgive, but he secured forgiveness for all who are in him. He did not die to make men savable, but to safe them. He came not that sin might be put aside at some future time, but to put it away there and then by the sacrifice of himself; for by his death he "finished transgressions, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness." Believers may know that when Jesus died they were delivered from the claims of law, and when he rose again their justification was secured. The blood of the Lamb is a real price, which did effectually ransom. The blood of the Lamb is a real cleansing, which did really purge away sin. This we believe and declare; and by this sign we conquer. Christ crucified, Christ the sacrifice for sin, Christ the effectual redeemer of men, we will proclaim everywhere, and thus put to rout the powers of darkness.

II. I have shown you the sword; I now come, in the second place, to speak to the question, HOW DO WE USE IT? "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb."

When a man gets a sword, you cannot be quite certain how he will use it. A gentleman has purchased a very expensive sword with a golden hilt and an elaborate scabbard: he hangs it up in his hall, and exhibits it to his friends. Occasionally he draws it out from the sheath, and he says, "Feel how keen is the edge!" The precious blood of Jesus is not meant for us merely to admire and exhibit. We must not be content to talk about it, and extol it, and do nothing with it; but we are to use it in the great crusade against unholiness and unrighteousness, till it is said of us, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." This precious blood is to be used for overcoming, and consequently for holy warfare. We dishonor it if we do not use it to that end. Some, I fear, use the precious blood of Christ only as a quietus to their consciences. They say to themselves, "He made atonement for sin, therefore let me take my rest." This is doing a grievous wrong to the great sacrifice. I grant you that the blood of Jesus does speak better things than that of Abel, and that it sweetly cries, "Peace! Peace!" within the troubled conscience; but that is not all that it does. A man who wants the blood of Jesus for nothing but the mean and selfish reason that after having been forgiven through it he may say, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry: hear sermons, enjoy the hope of eternal felicity, and do nothing"—such a man blasphemes the precious blood, and makes it an unholy thing. We are to use the glorious mystery of atoning blood as our chief means of overcoming sin and Satan: its power is for holiness. See how the text puts it: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb": these saints use the doctrine of atonement not as a pillow to rest their weariness, but as a weapon

to subdue their sin. O my brothers, to some of us atonement by blood is our battle-axe and weapon of war, by which we conquer in our struggle for purity and godliness—a struggle in which we have continued now these many years. By the atoning blood we withstand corruption within and temptation without. This is that weapon which nothing can resist.

Let me show you your battle-field. Our first place of conflict is in the heavenlies, and the second is down below on earth.

First, then, you, my brothers and sisters who believe in the blood of Jesus, have to do battle with Satan *in the heavenlies;* and there you must overcome him "by the blood of the Lamb." "How?" say you. I will lead you into this subject. First, you are to regard Satan this day as being already literally and *truly overcome through the death of the Lord Jesus.* Satan is already a vanquished enemy. By faith grasp your Lord's victory as your own, since he triumphed in your nature and on your behalf The Lord Jesus Christ went up to Calvary, and there fought with the prince of darkness, utterly defeated him, and destroyed his power. He led captivity captive. He bruised the serpent's head. The victory was the victory of all who are in Christ. He is the representative seed of the woman, and you who are of that seed and are in Christ actually and experimentally, you then and there overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb. Can you get a hold of this truth? Do you not know that you were circumcised in his circumcision, crucified on his cross, buried with him in baptism, and therein also risen with him in his resurrection? He is your federal head, and you being members of his body did in him what he did. Come, my soul, thou has con-

quered Satan by thy Lord's victory. Wilt thou not be brave enough to fight a vanquished foe, and trample down the enemy whom thy Lord hast already thrust down? Thou needest not be afraid, but say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." We have overcome sin, death and hell in the person and work of our great Lord; and we should be greatly encouraged by that which has been already wrought in our name. Already we are more than conquerors through him that hath loved us. If Jesus had not overcome the enemy, certainly we never should have done so; but his personal triumph has secured ours. By faith we rise into the conquering place this day. In the heavenlies we triumph, also in every place. We rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Michael of the angels, the Redeemer of men; for by him we seen Satan cast out, and all the powers of evil hurled from their places of power and eminence.

This day I would have you overcome Satan in the heavenlies in another sense: *you must overcome him as the accuser.* At times you hear in your heart a voice arousing memory and startling conscience; a voice which seems in heaven to be a remembrance of your guilt. Hark to that deep croaking voice, boding evil! Satan is urging before the throne of justice all your former sins. Can you hear him? He begins with your childish faults and your youthful follies. Truly a black memory. He does not let one of your wickednesses drop out. Things which you had forgotten he cunningly revives. He knows your secret sins, for he had a hand in most of them. He knows the resistance which you offered to the gospel, and the way in which you stifled conscience. He knows the sins of darkness, the sins of the bedchamber,

the crimes of the inner chambers of imagery. Since you have been a Christian he has marked your wickedness, and asked, in fierce, sarcastic tones, "Is this a child of God? Is this an heir of heaven?" He hopes to convict us of hypocrisy or of apostasy.

The foul fiend tells out the wanderings of our hearts, the deadness of our desires in prayer, the filthy thoughts that dropped into our minds when we have been at worship. Alas! we have to confess that we have even tolerated doubts as to eternal verities, and suspicions of the love and faithfulness of God. When the accuser is about his evil business, he does not have to look far for matter of accusation, nor for facts to support it. Do these accusations stagger you? Do you cry, "My God, how can I face thee? for all this is true, and the iniquities now brought to my remembrance are such as I cannot deny. I have violated thy law in a thousand ways, and I cannot justify myself." Now is your opportunity for overcoming through the blood of the Lamb. When the accuser has said his say, and aggravated all your transgressions, be not ashamed to step forward and say, "But I have an advocate as well as an accuser. O Jesus, my Saviour, speak for me!" When he speaks, what does he plead but his own blood? "For all these sins I have made atonement," says he, "all these iniquities were laid on me in the day of the Lord's anger, and I have taken them away." Brethren, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Jesus has borne the penalty due to us: he has discharged for us upon the cross all our liabilities to the justice of God, and we are free for ever, because our surety suffered in our place. Where is the accuser now? That dragon voice is silenced by the blood of the Lamb. Nothing else

can ever silence the accuser's cruel voice but the voice of the blood which tells of the infinite God accepting, in our behalf, the sacrifice which he himself supplied. Justice decrees that the sinful shall be clear, because the accepted substitute has borne his sin in his own body on the tree. Come, brother or sister, the next time thou hast to do with Satan as an accuser in the heavenly places, take care that thou defend thyself with no weapon but the atonement. All comfort drawn from inward feelings or outward works will fall short; but the bleeding wounds of Jesus will plead with full and overwhelming argument, and answer all. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Who, then, shall accuse the child of God? Every accuser shall be overcome by the invincible argument of the blood of the Lamb.

Still further, the believer will have need to overcome the enemy in the heavenly places in reference to *access to God*. It may happen that when we are most intent upon communing with God, the adversary hinders us. Our heart and our flesh cry out for God, the living God; but from one cause or another we are unable to draw nigh unto the throne. The heart is heavy, sin is rampant, care is harassing, and Satanic insinuation is busy. You seem shut out from God, and the enemy triumphs over you. You feel very near the world, and very near the flesh, and very near the devil: but you mourn your miserable distance from God. You are like a child who cannot reach his father's door because a black dog barks at him from the door. What is the way of access? If

the foul fiend will not move out of the way, can we force our passage? By what weapon can we drive away the adversary so as to come to God? Is it not written that we are made nigh by the blood? Is there not a new and living way consecrated for us? Have we not boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus? We are sure of God's love when we see that Christ died for us; we are sure of God's favor when we see how that atonement has removed our transgressions far from us. We perceive our liberty to come to the Father, and therefore we each one say--

> "I will approach thee—I will force
> My way through obstacles to thee;
> To thee for strength will have recourse,
> To thee for consolation flee!"

Pleading the propitiation made by the blood of the Lamb, we dare draw nigh to God. Behold, the evil spirit makes way before us. The sacred name of Jesus is one before which he flees. This will drive away his blasphemous suggestions and foul insinuations better than anything that you can invent. The dog of hell knows the dread name which makes him lie down: we must confront him with the authority, and specially with the atonement of the Lamb of God. He will rage and rave all the more if we send Moses to him; for he derives his power from our breaches of the law, and we cannot silence him unless we bring to him the great Lord who has kept the law, and made it honorable.

We next must *overcome the enemy in prayer.* Alas! we cannot always pray as we would. Do you never feel when you are in prayer as if something choked your utterance—and, what is worse, deadened your heart?

Instead of having wings as of an eagle to mount to heaven, a secret evil clips your wings, and you cannot rise. You say within yourself, "I have no faith, and I cannot expect to succeed with God without faith. I seem to have no love; or, if I have any, my heart lies asleep, and I cannot stir myself to plead with God. Oh, that I could come out of my closet saying, 'VICI! VICI!'—'I have overcome, I have overcome;' but, alas! instead thereof I groan in vain, and come away unrelieved. I have been half dead, cold, and stolid, and I cannot hope that I have prevailed with God in prayer." Whenever you are in this condition, fly to the blood of the Lamb as your chief remedy. When you plead this master argument you will arouse yourself, and you will prevail with God. You will feel rest in pleading it, and a sweet assurance of success at the mercy-seat. Try the method at once. This is the way in which you should use this plea. Say, "My God, I am utterly unworthy, and I own it; but, I beseech thee, hear me for the honor of thy dear Son. By his agony and bloody sweat, by his cross and passion, by his precious death and burial, I beseech thee hear me! O Lord, let the blood of thine Only-begotten prevail with thee! Canst thou put aside his groans, his tears, his death, when they speak on my behalf?" If you can thus come to pleading terms with God upon this ground, you must and will prevail. Jesus must be heard in heaven. The voice of his blood is eloquent with God. If you plead the atoning sacrifice, you must overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

Thus have I spoken of overcoming in the heavenlies; but I shall have to show you how you must contend against the evil one in a lower sphere, even on this earth. You must first overcome in the heavenly places

before the throne; and when you have been thus triumphant with God in prayer, you will have grace to go forth to service and to defeat evil among your fellowmen. How often have I personally found that the battle must first be fought above! We must overcome *in order to service.* Many a score of times of late I should not have ventured into this pulpit had it not been for power at the mercy-seat. Those who know the burden of the Lord are often bowed down, and would not be able to bear up at all were it not for having in secret battled with their enemy and won the day. I have been bowed down before the Lord, and in his presence I have pleaded the precious blood as the reason for obtaining help, and the help has been given. Faith, having once made sure that Jesus is hers, helps herself out of the treasury of God to all that she needs. Satan would deny her, but in the power of the blood she takes possession of covenant blessings. You say to yourself, "I am weak, but in the Lord, my God, there is power: I take it to myself. I am hard and cold, but here is tenderness and warmth, and I appropriate it. It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fulness dwell, and by virtue of his precious blood, I take out of that fulness what I need, and then with help thus obtained I meet the enemy and overcome him." Satan would hinder our getting supplies of grace wherewith to overcome him; but with the blood-mark on our foot we can go anywhere; with the blood-mark on our hand we dare take anything. Having access with confidence, we also take with freedom whatsoever we need, and thus we are provided against all necessities, and armed against all assaults through the atoning sacrifice. This is the fountain of supply, and the shield of security: this, indeed,

is the channel through which we receive strength for victory.

We overcome the great enemy by *laying hold upon the all-sufficiency of God*, when we really feel the power of the precious blood of Christ. Thus being victorious in the heavenlies, we come down to the pulpit or to the Sunday-school class made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Having overcome Satan at the throne of grace, we see him like lightning fall from heaven, even before our feeble instrumentality. We speak, and God speaks with us; we long for souls, and God's great heart is yearning with us. We importune men to come, and the Lord also pleads with them to come, so that they no longer resist. Spiritual power of a holy kind rests upon us to overcome the spiritual power of an evil kind which is exerted by Satan, the world, and the flesh. The Lord scatters the power of the enemy, and breaks the spell which holds men captive. Through the blood of the Lamb we become masters of the situation, and the weakest among us is able to work great wonders. Coming forth to the service of God in the power of our victory in heaven, gained by pleading the blood of the Lamb, we march on conquering and to conquer, and no power of the enemy is able to stand against us.

It is time that I now showed you how this same fight is carried on *on earth*. Amongst men in these lower places of conflict saints overcome through the blood of the Lamb *by their testimony to that blood*. Every believer is to bear witness to the atoning sacrifice and its power to save. He is to tell out the doctrine; he is to emphasize it by earnest faith in it; and he is to support it and prove it by his experience of the effect of it. You cannot all speak from the pulpit, but you can all speak

for Jesus as opportunity is given you. Our main business is to bear witness with the blood in the power of the Spirit. To this point we can all testify. You can not go into all manner of deep doctrines or curious points, but you can tell to all those round about you that "There is life in a look at the Crucified One." You can bear witness to the power of the blood of Jesus in your own soul. If you do this, you will overcome men in many ways. First, you will *arouse them out of apathy.* This age is more indifferent to true religion than almost any other. It is alive enough to error, but to the old faith it turns a deaf ear. Yet I have noticed persons captivated by the truth of substitution who would not listen to anything else. If any discourse can hold men, as the Ancient Mariner detained the wedding guest, it is the story of divine love, incarnate in the person of Jesus, bleeding and dying for guilty men. Try that story when attention flags. It has a fascination about it. The marvellous history of the Son of God, who loved his enemies, and died for them—this will arrest them. The history of the Holy One who stood in the sinners' place, and was in consequence put to shame, and agony, and death—this will touch them. The sight of the bleeding Saviour overcomes obduracy and carelessness.

The doctrine of the blood of the Lamb prevents or *scatters error.* I do not think that by reasoning we often confute error to any practical purpose; we may confute it rhetorically and doctrinally, but men still stick to it. But the doctrine of the precious blood, when it once gets into the heart, drives error out of it, and sets up the throne of truth. You cannot be clinging to an atoning sacrifice, and still delight in modern

heresies. Those who deny inspiration are sure to get rid of the vicarious atonement, because it will not allow their errors. Let us go on proclaiming the doctrine of the great sacrifice, and this will kill the vipers of heresy. Let us uplift the cross, and never mind what other people say. Perhaps we have taken too much notice of them already. Let the dogs bark, it is their nature to. Go on preaching Christ crucified. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ!

We also overcome men in this way, by *softening rebellious hearts.* Men stand out against the law of God, and defy the vengeance of God; but the love of God in Christ Jesus disarms them. The Holy Spirit causes men to yield through the softening influence of the cross. A bleeding Saviour makes men throw down their weapons of rebellion. "If he loves me so," they say, "I cannot do other than love him in return." We overcome men's obduracy by the blood, shed for many for the remission of sins.

How wonderfully this same blood of the Lamb *overcomes despair.* Have you never seen a man shut up in the iron cage? It has been my painful duty to talk with several of such prisoners. I have seen the captive shake the iron bars, but he could not break them, or break from them. He has implored us to set him free by some means; but we have been powerless. Glory be to God, the blood is a universal solvent, and it has dissolved the iron bars of despair, until the poor captive conscience has been able to escape. How sweet for the desponding to sing—

> "I do believe, I will believe,
> That Jesus died for me!"

Believing *that*, all doubts, and fears, and despairs fly away, and the man is at ease.

There is nothing, indeed, dear friends, which the blood of the Lamb will not overcome; for see how it *overcomes vice*, and every form of sin. The world is foul with evil, like a stable which has long been the lair of filthy creatures. What can cleanse it? What but this matchless stream? Satan makes sin seem pleasurable, but the cross reveals its bitterness. If Jesus died because of sin, men begin to see that sin must be a murderous thing. Even when sin was but imputed to the Saviour, it made him pour out his soul unto death; it must, then, be a hideous evil to those who are actually and personally guilty of it. If God's rod made Christ sweat great drops of blood, what will his axe do when he executes the capital sentence upon impenitent men! Yes, we overcome the deadly sweetness and destructive pleasurableness of sin by the blood of the Lamb.

This blood overcomes *the natural lethargy of men toward obedience;* it stimulates them to holiness. If anything can make a man holy it is a firm faith in the atoning sacrifice. When a man knows that Jesus died for him, he feels that he is not his own, but bought with a price, and therefore he must live unto him that died for him and rose again. In the atonement I see a motive equal to the greatest heroism; yes, a motive which will stimulate to perfect holiness. What manner of persons ought we to be for whom such a sacrifice has been presented! Now are we quickened into intensity of zeal and devotion. See, dear brothers, how to use the blood of the Lamb in this lower sphere while contending with evil among men. But I must close with this. It is not merely by testimony that we use this potent truth. *We*

must support that testimony by our zeal and energy. We need concentrated, consecrated energy; for it is written, "They loved not their lives unto the death." We shall not overcome Satan if we are fine gentlemen, fond of ease and honor. As long as Christian people must needs enjoy the world, the devil will suffer little at their hands. They that overcame the world in the old days were humble men and women, generally poor, always despised, who were never ashamed of Christ, who only lived to tell of his love, and died by tens of thousands rather than cease to bear testimony to the blood of the Lamb. They overcame by their heroism; their intense devotion to the cause secured the victory. Their lives to them were as nothing when compared with the honor of their Lord.

Brethren, if we are to win great victories we must have greater courage. Some of you hardly dare speak about the blood of Christ in any but the most godly company; and scarcely there. You are very retiring. You love yourselves too much to get into trouble through your religion. Surely you cannot be of that noble band that love not their own lives unto the death! Many dare not hold the old doctrine nowadays because they would be thought narrow and bigoted, and this would be too galling. They call us old fools. It is very likely we are; but we are not ashamed to be fools for Christ's sake, and the truth's sake. We believe in the blood of the Lamb, despite the discoveries of science. We shall never give up the doctrine of atoning sacrifice to please modern culture. What little reputation we have is as dear to us as another man's character is to him; but we will cheerfully let it go in this struggle for the central truth of revelation. It will be sweet to be forgotten and lost sight of, or to be vilified and abused,

if the old faith in the substitutionary sacrifice can be kept alive. This much we are resolved on, we will be true to our convictions concerning the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus; for if we give up this, what is there left? God will not do anything by us if we are false to the cross. He uses the men who spare not their reputations when these are called for in defence of truth. Oh to be at a white-heat! Oh to flame with zeal for Jesus! O my brethren, hold you to the old faith, and say, "As for the respect of men, I can readily forfeit it; but as for the truth of God, that I can never give up." This is the day for men to be men; for, alas! the most are soft, molluscous creatures. Now we need backbones as well as heads. To believe the truth concerning the Lamb of God, and truly to believe it, this is the essential of an overcoming life. Oh for courage, constancy, fixedness, self-denial, willingness to be made nothing of for Christ! God give us to be faithful witnesses to the blood of the Lamb in the midst of this ungodly world!

As for those of you who are not saved, does not this subject give you a hint? Your hope lies in the blood of the Lamb.

> "Come, guilty souls, and flee away,
> Like doves, to Jesus' wounds."

The atoning sacrifice, which is our glory, is your salvation. Trust in him whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Begin with this, and you are saved. Every good and holy thing which goes with salvation will follow after; but now, this morning, I pray you accept a present salvation through the blood of the Lamb. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life."

XV.

ALL AT IT.

September 16, 1888.

"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them."—ACTS viii. 4, 5.

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."—ACTS viii. 35.

"THEY that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." God intended that his church should be scattered over the world. There was a tendency in our humanity at first to remain together; hence the first grey fathers endeavored to build a central tower, around which the race should rally. God confounded their language, and scattered them from Babel, that they might people all the world. Jerusalem was at first the central point of Christianity. The church there was highly favored with its twelve apostles and a multitude of minor lights; and the tendency would have been to keep the centre strong. I have often heard the argument, "Do not have too many out stations, keep up a strong central force." But God's plan was that the holy force should be distributed: the holy seed must be sown. To do this the Lord made use of the rough hand of persecution. The disciples could not stay in Jerusalem: Saul made them run for their lives, or, if they did not, he shut them up in prison; and prisons in those days

were so foul and noisome as to be the vestibules of the grave. One went this way, and one went the other way; and the faithful were scattered.

In every church where there is really the power of the Spirit of God, the Lord will cause it to be spread abroad, more or less. He never means that a church should be like a nut shut up in a shell; nor like ointment enclosed in a box. The precious perfume of the gospel must be poured forth to sweeten the air. Just now we have little of that form of persecution which drives men from home. But godly people are scattered through the necessity of earning a livelihood. Sometimes we regret that certain young men should have to go to a distance; but should we regret it? We lament that certain families must migrate to the colonies. Does not the Lord by this means sow the good seed widely? It is very pleasant to be comfortably settled under an edifying ministry, but the Lord has need of some of his servants in places where there is no light. In many ways the great Head of the church scatters his servants abroad; but they ought of themselves to scatter voluntarily. Every Christian should say, "Where can I do the most good?" and if he can do more good anywhere beneath the sun than in the land of his birth, he is bound to go there, if he can. God will have us scattered; and if we will not go afield willingly, he may use providential necessity as the forcible means of our dispersion.

The Lord's design is not the scattering in itself, but scattering for a purpose. He intended that, being scattered, the saints of Jerusalem should go everywhere preaching the word. Upon this I am going to speak at this time.

I would call your attention to the translation in the

Revised Version, where Philip is said to have "proclaimed" the word. The word proclaim is not quite so subject to the modern sense which has spoiled the word "preach." "Preach" has come to be a sort of official term for delivering a set discourse; whereas gospel preaching is talking, discoursing, and telling out the gospel in any way. We are to make known the word of the Lord.

I. In handling my subject, I shall call your attention, first, to THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE WORK OF EVANGELIZING—of course I mean its universality among believers. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." They; that is, all the scattered. There does not appear to have been any exception. You thought it would have read, "Then the apostles went everywhere preaching the word." They were just the people who did not go at all; for the twelve remained at headquarters as yet; but the rest went everywhere preaching the word. Generals may have to stand still in the centre of the battle to direct the forces; but in this battle all the common soldiers marched to the fight. This was to be a soldiers' battle; and of that sort all the battles of the cross ought to be.

Observe then, first, that in this *there were no professional distinctions.* It is not said that the ministers, being scattered abroad, went everywhere proclaiming the word; but the whole of the scattered. Scarcely anything has been more injurious to the kingdom of Christ than the distinction between clergy and laity. No such distinction was ever laid down by the Spirit of God. "Ye are God's *kleros*": all God's saints are God's inheritance; and we should regard ourselves as such. "Ye are a royal priesthood." "He hath made us unto

our God kings and priests." As in heaven there is no temple because it is all temple, so in the church of God there is no priesthood because it is all priesthood.

We have among ourselves a distinction between ministers and others. But you are all to minister. There are many ministries of one form and another; and though God gives to his church apostles, teachers, pastors, evangelists, and the like, yet not by way of setting up a professional caste of men, who are to do the work for God while others sit still. I have aforetime used the following parable :—In olden times a certain host had conquered wherever they went forward in one mass. But it came to pass that they thought themselves so exceeding strong that they said, "Let not every man go to war. Let us choose a few, and make this few into a select standing army." They picked out their champions, and sent them to the war. These continued the conflict with difficulty; many of them fell in the fight. No provinces were added to the kingdom, and things were at a standstill. They had followed a fatal policy. The true method was for the whole of them to march to battle. This is the true and only policy of Christianity—all Christian soldiers of the cross, and all on active service. Every converted man is to teach what he knows; all those who have drunk of the living water are to become fountains out of which shall flow rivers of living water. We shall never get back to the grand old times of conquest until we get back to the old method of "all at it." In proportion as we come in any one church, to individual service; nobody dreaming of doing his work by deputy, but each one serving God for himself; in that proportion, under the blessing of God, we shall come back to the old success.

Observe, next, that *there were no professional exceptions.*

Philip is mentioned as going down to Samaria to preach; but Philip was originally set apart to attend to the distribution of the alms of the church. It is good for every man to attend to his own special office; but where that office ceases to be needful, let him get to that work which is common and constant. The time has come when there was no need for the deacon to sit in the vestry, for the poor people were all scattered. What does the deacon do? As the work to which he was appointed has come to an end, he keeps to the work for which every Christian is appointed, and he proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. No one of us, then, can be exempted from the work of spreading the gospel because we are engaged in some other work. Good as it is, though it may be very intimately connected with the kingdom of Christ, yet it does not exonerate us from the work of endeavoring to bring sinners to Christ in some way or other. Stephen, the deacon, began first to bear testimony; and when he died, Philip, the next on the roll, stepped into his place. One soldier falls, and another steps forward. All are to proclaim the word, and no one is exempted by another form of service. Oh, that the Lord's people everywhere would note this!

Observe that there were *no educational or literary exceptions*. It is thought nowadays that a man must not try to proclaim the gospel, unless he has had a good education. To try and preach Christ, and yet to commit grammatical blunders, is looked upon as a grave offence. People are mightily offended at the idea of the gospel being properly preached by an uneducated man. This I believe to be a very injurious mistake. There is nothing whatsoever in the whole compass of Scripture to excuse any mouth from speaking for Jesus when the

heart is really acquainted with his salvation. We are not all called to "preach," in the new sense of the term, but we are all called to make Jesus known if we know him. Has the gospel ever been spread to any extent by men of high literary power? Look through the whole line of history, and see if it is so. Have the men of splendid eloquence been remarkable for winning souls? I could quote names that stand first in the roll of oratory, which are low down in the roll of soul winners. Those whom God has most honored have been men who, whatever their gifts, have consecrated them to God; and have earnestly declared the great truths of God's Word. Men who have been terribly in earnest, and have faithfully described man's ruin by sin, and God's remedy of grace—men who have warned sinners to escape from the wrath to come by believing in the Lord Jesus—these have been useful. If they had great gifts, they were no detriment to them; if they had few talents, this did not disqualify them. It has pleased God to use the base things of this world, and things that are despised, for the accomplishment of his great purposes of love. Paul declared that he proclaimed the gospel, "not with wisdom of words." He feared what might happen if he used worldly rhetoric, and therefore he refused the wisdom of words. We have need to do so now with emphasis. Let us trust in the divine energy of the Holy Ghost, and speak the truth in reliance upon his might, whether we can speak fluently with Apollos, or are slow of speech, like Moses. I say, then, to you, my dear friend, who unhappily may be lacking in education, do not therefore stay your testimony to our Lord. Rescue the perishing. What if you are not a great theologian! If you understand the plan of salvation you are sufficiently instructed

to be a good witness for your Lord. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may make you such! A smith can shoe a horse, though he has never studied astronomy. He might be none the worse smith if he were familiar with the stars; but I fail to see that he would be much the better as a smith. Warn men to escape from the wrath to come, and believe in Jesus; and you can do this just as well though no science has puzzled you.

As there were no exceptions on account of educational defects, so were there *no exclusions on account of sex.* Men and women were to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus. We read that, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men *and women* committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad" (and these must have been men *and women)* "went everywhere preaching the word."

There are many ways in which women can fittingly proclaim the word of the Lord, and in some of these they can proclaim it more efficiently than men. There are minds that will be attracted by the tender, plaintive, winning manner in which the sister in Christ expresses herself. A Christian mother! What a minister is she to her family! A Christian woman in single life—in the family circle, or even in domestic service—what may she not accomplish, if her heart be warm with love to her Saviour! We cannot say to the women, "Go home, there is nothing for *you* to do in the service of the Lord." Far from it, we entreat Martha and Mary, Lydia and Dorcas, and all the elect sisterhood, young and old, rich and poor, to instruct others as God instructs them. Young men and maidens, old men and matrons, yes, and boys and girls who love the Lord,

should speak well of Jesus, and make known his salvation from day to day.

You see, dear friends, how the Lord gave to all his people the holy work of making Jesus known to men. How well they carried it out! Within a hundred years after the death of our Lord, his name had been made known to all the known world. But I do not know how many years it will take to make Christ known at the rate of our present movement. A few men are set apart for missionaries, and directed with complicated machinery, and good people feel easy about the heathen. I find no fault with what is done; but my fault is that we are not doing a hundred times as much in ways more spontaneous. If the church of God should once wake up, it will be as the sea when it returns to its strength after a long ebb. The Lord send it—send it now! But he will only bless the world in his own way; and one of his conditions is that the whole church should move. We must come back to the primitive custom: every Christian must be a herald of the cross.

II. Secondly, having asked you to notice the universality of the work, will you please to notice THE NATURALNESS OF IT. That word "therefore," at the commencement of the fourth verse, says a great deal to me. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word"—as if it followed as a sort of natural consequence, that being scattered they went everywhere preaching the word. Does not this show us that *they could not think of following any other course?* They that were scattered might have said, "Clearly our duty is to hold our tongues; we have got into great trouble at Jerusalem because we preached Christ. We must now look to our own safety, and the comfort of our

families; and in these foreign countries we had better live godly lives, and go to heaven on the sly, but we need not again expose ourselves to the dangers of persecution." They did not thus argue. It is not said, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad slunk away, and held their tongues." No, they never thought of that.

We do not find that they even said, "This gospel of ours is evidently not in accord with the spirit of the age. The Scribes and Pharisees all differ from us, and we must endeavor to win them by altering our tone." They did not dream of cutting off the angles of truth, nor of inserting pleasant fragments of popular thought to please the powers that be; but they set forth "the word" in its pure simplicity, and the cross of Christ, which is an offence to so many. They never said, "The old gospel did very well when Jesus was here; but you see he has gone, and circumstances alter cases, and alter gospels, and we had better adapt our teaching to the period." They did not so because of the fear of the Lord. They did not endeavor to mend the gospel, but they went everywhere proclaiming it. They preached the word as they received it; they set forth the kingdom as their King had revealed it. Ah, dear friends! if you are true to the Lord Jesus Christ you have to spread the gospel somehow, and it must be the old, old gospel. You must not dare to think of denying the light to those around you. Would you leave men to perish for lack of knowledge? Dare you have their blood on your skirts?

These persecuted ones "went everywhere preaching the word." Why was it so natural to them to do it? *Their obligations pressed upon them.* They each one of them said, "I have been saved, and I must see others

saved. I am bound to tell of the blood of Jesus, and its power to wash away sin. The curses of the ages will fall upon me, and the wails of lost souls will come up into my ears as long as I exist, if I do not make known the gospel." Brethren, God's way of saving the unconverted is through his church; and if the church neglects its work, who is to do it? Our Lord means to bring in the rest of his chosen through those who are already called; but if these start aside and are untrue to their calling, how is the work to be done? I know the work is of God alone; still he uses instruments. If you do not tell the gospel, you are leaving your fellow-men to perish. Yonder is the wreck, and you are not sending out the life-boat! Yonder are souls starving, and you give them no bread! Well, if you are resolved to be thus inhuman, at least know what you are doing. You that are taking no share in this great work of spreading the gospel are wilfully allowing men to go down to hell, and their blood will be required at your hands. These first believers dared not incur such guilt, and therefore away they went preaching the word.

I think, too, that *their wonderment compelled them.* They had seen the man Christ Jesus, and they had communed with him. They had beheld his Godhead in his miracles, and they had adored. They had seen him nailed to the cross; they had many of them beheld him alive after he was risen from the dead, and they could not help telling out so great a marvel. Here was God come down among men. Here was the Redeemer of men suffering to the death to rescue men from eternal ruin; and they could not help telling abroad this miracle of love. They were like children, who, when they hear a bit of startling news, must tell it. Good men that they were,

their wonderment and their joy were equal, and they could not hold their peace. When ancient believers were shut up in prison, they began to sing the gospel until the prisoners heard them. They had something to sing about, and they must sing it. If they took them out of the temple by force, behold, the moment the prison doors were opened, they were found standing in the same place, telling the same story. If you and I felt that blessed amazement which we ought to feel when we think of free grace and dying love, silence would be impossible.

The principal reason for their constant proclamation of Jesus was, that *they were in a fine state of spiritual health.* They went everywhere preaching the word when scattered abroad, because they had told it out when at home. You will never make a missionary of the person who does no good at home. If you do not seek souls in your own street, you will not do so in Hindostan. If you are of no use in Whitechapel, you will be of no use on the Congo. He that will not serve the Lord in the Sunday-school at home, will not win children to Christ in China. Distance lends no real enchantment to Christian service. You who do nothing now, are not fit for the war, for you are in sad health. The Lord give you spiritual health and vigor, and then you will want no pressing, but you will cry at once, "Here am I; send me!" O my friends, go at once to your families, to your workshops, and declare the name of Jesus! Oh, for more spiritual life! This is the root of the matter. If we were living more fully in the power of the Holy Spirit, our witness would be borne without constraint; it would be as natural to us to spread the gospel as to breathe. We should be under holy impulses which

would demand our witness-bearing; for if we could not speak the word of the Lord, it would be as fire in our bones; we should become weary with withholding. Lord, give us this spiritual life more and more!

Surely also *the times must have urged them onward*, to go with hurried steps as messengers for Christ; for Jerusalem was soon to be destroyed. This made them quick in their movements, that the last warning might come to all their countrymen. You know what the times are now! I am no prophet; but as we read, week by week, the appalling crimes that are chronicled by the press, if ever Christian men should be in earnest, they should be in earnest now. All the signs of the times arouse us to look for the coming of our Lord. No token tends to quiet us, but all to awaken us. We must work at double quick rate; and if any one among us has done nothing at all, it is time for him, as a good servant, to gird up his loins, to work and to watch, "for in such an hour as he thinks not the Son of man cometh." I have been praying all the while that I have been speaking this morning; yes, praying more than preaching, that God may distinctly lay his hand on every brother and sister in this place, and constrain you to proclaim this gospel of Jesus in every place to which you can go.

III. Thirdly, carefully notice THE JOYFULNESS OF THIS WORK. "They were scattered abroad"; but as "they went everywhere preaching the word," the calamity became a blessing. Their work took the sting out of their banishment. The housewife had to leave her comfortable little home, and tramp to a strange country: the man of business had to sell his stock, and quit his position. Those were very hard times beyond question. Fancy that happening to us! What distress

would spread over this congregation if you had to run for your lives! But then they said to themselves, "It is all right; for as we live to spread abroad the knowledge of Jesus, we shall do this wherever we go. Our flight shall be a mission." This changed the aspect of affairs. By the persecution they received express marching orders to quit home and take to foreign service. Was not this a comfort? For myself, I always like to know the Lord's will clearly. Suspense kills me. If I have any question about what my course should be, I am worried more than I can tell. Even distress is a relief when it shuts you up to one course. Persecution became both a direction as to their course and an occasion for getting to work. As they must go elsewhere, they would talk of salvation by faith in Jesus to the people among whom they might be called to sojourn, and so tell out the story of redemption to people who were totally ignorant thereof. This made them feel it was a good thing after all that they were scattered abroad. Dear friends, if your heart is set on a purpose, and there comes a crash which spoils your comfort, you hardly lament it if it subserves your chief design in life. If you are possessed with the idea that you, as a Christian, must live only to serve Christ, and to win souls, then anything which happens, however painful, will be welcomed if it places you in a better position for your holy life-work. That is the better place in which you can serve the Lord better. So that the tried people of God at Jerusalem must have felt devoutly comforted as they saw that God was helping them to answer the great purpose of their lives, and was pushing them forward by pushing them out.

Their exile would be a help in gaining attention; for

when they came to a place, the people would inquire, "Why are these Jews coming here?" And the answer would be, that they had been forced from home because they believed in one Jesus, who was called Christ, who had died for men, so that by faith in him they might be saved. For love of this Saviour they had been driven from their native land. The people may not have thought them wise, but doubtless they would be interested in their story, and thus made aware of their faith. Curiosity would ask of yonder Jewess, "How came you to be here, Naomi," And Naomi would tell the story of the crucified Saviour. "And you, Benjamin, what drove you from Palestine?" He, too, would have to narrate the life and death of the Nazarene, and so Jesus would be made known. Persecution thus opened men's minds to inquire, and served the purpose of advertising the gospel. Thus the Lord set up pulpits for his servants wherever they went, and provided congregations for them. What Satan intended for evil the Lord turned for good. What better could have happened than for all these holy men and women to be driven abroad to disseminate the ever blessed word? This, as they thought of it, made them bear their exile without repining. An all-absorbing purpose turned sorrow into joy. I cannot conceive of anything so calculated to reconcile them to their banishment as the prospect of glorifying God the more. The martyr spirit is just the spirit of witness-bearing overcoming all love of self and even care for life.

Moreover, as they told the story, and it made their own hearts glow with holy fire, their spirits were refreshed and their souls made glad. Jesus seems still to be near them: yes, he was with them. They found the surest

remedy for their grief in his sacred fellowship: nay, the grief itself became gladness. If you want to get rid of low spirits, preach the gospel. To take Christ's yoke is to find rest unto your souls. If you are in the very dust go and tell a weary one of salvation by Jesus: you will thus raise yourself, even if your message be rejected. Here is a balm, which, while it heals the wound to which it is applied, also perfumes the hand which applies it. The exiles were made to feel at home when they saw God working with them in Greece and Rome, even as he had done in Jerusalem.

I may add that, if they were led to see that they were now made like their Lord in suffering they would have comfort in that fact. If they now remembered what he said concerning the grain of wheat, which must be cast into the ground and die, or it could not bring forth fruit, they would now feel that they were having fellowship with him in his sufferings. This was enough to make them a happy body of men and women. They were scattered, but not saddened. Theirs was not the scattering of a retreat, but of an advance all along the line; and so it yielded them joy, and not distress. I entreat you, try active service as a solance for sorrow.

IV. Notice, fourthly, THE SUPREMACY OF THIS WORK. "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." I suppose they did something for a living. I do not know what their handicrafts might be; but each one had a calling, and followed it industriously. We are not told what they did. It is incidentally mentioned, further on in history, that the apostle Paul made tents: but you never read anywhere in the Bible that Paul went everywhere tent making. He did make tents, but that was not his vocation; his busi-

ness was to save souls. He made tents, in order that he might not be chargeable to the people; but winning souls was Paul's business. The scattered did not go abroad for the purpose of trade. They did not say, "We will go to such a place, because there we can make the best profits"; but they chose their way with the one purpose of spreading the gospel. To preach Christ was their one vocation which, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up all the other rods. Proclaiming Christ was their one purpose, passion, and profession: all else might go. I wonder how many Christian people here could have their biographies condensed into this line, "He lived to make Christ known." Might it not be said of one, he lived to open a shop, and then to open a second? or of another, he lived to save a good deal of money, and take shares in limited liability companies? or of a third, he lived to paint a great picture? or of a fourth, he was best known for his genial hospitality? Of many a minister it might be said—he lived to preach splendid sermons, and to gain credit for fine oratory. What of all these? If it can be said of a man, "He lived to glorify Christ," then his life is a life. Every Christian man ought so to live. Oh that my memorial might be: "He preached Christ crucified"! You fall short of your design in life if Jesus is not as much your object as he is your confidence. Make your tents, sell you goods, paint your pictures if you will; but do all this in order that you may fulfil your higher and truer life, for which you were bought with blood, and quickened by the Spirit of God.

We note the supremacy of this work, not only because it swallowed up all their trades, but because it *obliterated all trace of caste*. See Philip. He is a Jew, but he goes to Samaria. "Philip, what made you go to Samaria?

Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Brethren, when it comes to preaching Christ, we have dealings with everybody—Jews, Turks, infidels, cannibals. The Jew goes to Samaria for Christ, and the Samaritans accept the Messiah of the Jews. Anon Philip is called down south to journey along a desert way, and there he meets an Ethiopian, probably a black man. Ah well! white men were not particularly anxious for the company of Ethiopians, but Philip gets up into his chariot, and rides with him. Black and white make a fine mixture when the book of the prophet Isaiah lies between them.

What a beautiful picture this would make! Philip and the eunuch riding together reading of the Lord Jesus in the Hebrew prophets. All the paltry differences of sect, politics, nationalities and races go to the winds as soon as we are possessed with a desire to win souls. "Oh, but they are so dirty!" Let us show them how they can be cleansed. "But the slum is so foul!" Yet for the love of Jesus we will enter it to carry his saving health among the people.

What is more, we shall not only be willing to work for the poor and fallen, but we shall *work with them*. You, a person of taste and culture, will join hands with the illiterate worker, and while you are half amused at his blunders, you will be charmed by his zeal. You will not despise him, but you may even feel humbled as you see how, with less knowledge than yourself, he often shows more spiritual wisdom and energy. You will take a brotherly pride in such a man. Caste is gone when Christ is come. Oh, that we might feel the supremacy of our holy service more and more! Christ must be made known; sinners must be saved; heaven must be

filled; and before these necessities everything else must be as nothing. Are you not of this mind?

See, also, the supremacy of their purpose, in the fact that *they were willing to be at the beck and call of the Holy Spirit*, and to go anywhere. Philip was getting on splendidly at Samaria, and the church grew under his care. Surely he ought to stop there, he is evidently the man for the place! But he does not stop there. Philip has a call, not to a larger church, but to the road through the desert, and away he goes to talk to one person. The genuine soul-winner has his inward directions, and he follows the guidance of the Spirit of God. Here, there, anywhere, everywhere he goes, where the hope of conversions tempts him. When a sportsman goes out after game, he does not know which way he will go, neither does he bind himself in that matter. If he is deer-stalking, he may have to go up the mountain side, or down the glen, across the burn, or away among the heather. Where his sport leads him, he follows; and so it is with the genuine soul-winner; he leaves himself free to follow his one object. He does not know where he is going, but he does know what he is going after. He lays himself out for the winning of souls for Jesus. On the railway he speaks to any one who happens to be put in the same carriage; or in the shop he looks out for opportunities to impress a customer. He sows beside all waters, and in all soils. He carries his gun at half-cock, ready to take aim at once. That is the man whom God is likely to bless.

Note yet one thing more: the supremacy of this work was seen in the fact that these good people *were quite willing to subside*. Philip has done a great work at Samaria, but he sends for the apostles Peter and John to come

down from Jerusalem. Some few earnest workers have been impatient of discipline, but the best of them are the most orderly people in the world. Some brethren are just as ready to obey church authority as if they were the least of all saints, instead of being the most successful of the brotherhood. It is not well when our Philips are too big to work in connection with the mother-church. I have never found them so. The idle are troublesome; the laborious are loving. Philip turns into nobody just as readily as before he had been everybody. Peter and John come upon the scene, and seem, as it were, to run away with his laurels; but Philip makes no complaint, for in fact there were no laurels for any of them; all the glory was given to Jesus. Whether it were Philip, or Peter, or John, the Lord alone was magnified. Blessed is that man who knows how to subside. Oh, that there were thousands of workers of this kind willing to come to the front, and lead the way, and just as willing to step aside, if thereby the cause might advance!

V. Thus have I brought this matter before you, and I shall now beg you to observe THE SPECIALITY OF THIS WORK. I have shown you its universality, its naturalness, its joyfulness, and its supremacy; and now we will dwell upon its speciality. Philip is set before us as a specimen of those who were scattered abroad. A sample shows the whole. What did Philip make prominent? "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached *Christ* unto them." That is all he had to preach, he preached the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. But when Philip had to instruct an educated nobleman, did he dwell on the same subject as that which he brought before common Samaritans? Read the thirty-fifth verse. "Then Philip opened his mouth and

began at the same scripture, and preached unto him *Jesus.*" Here we have the same subject as before: to the Samaritans Christ, to the Ethiopian Jesus. See, then, what we have to do. We have to tell over and over again what we know so well, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The Saviour lived here a life of holy obedience, and then died, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We preach that this Jesus made atonement for sin, so that whosoever believeth in him hath eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation. We declare that Jesus rose again, and that this new life he bestows on those who trust him; that he has gone into heaven to take possession of the inheritance for his people, and to plead for them before the throne; and that those who are in him shall one day be with him and behold his glory. In a word, we preach Jesus as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

This is the old, old story. It is a very simple story, but the telling of it will save the people. Keep to that gospel. Many have lost faith in it. It is hoped that people will now be saved by new socialistic arrangements, by moral precepts, by amusements, by societies, and what not. Let the church of God be glad when anything is done which helps temperance, purity, freedom, and so forth; but *her* one business is to preach Christ. Stick to this, my brethren. If all the shoemakers in London were to take to making bracelets for the Queen, she would be badly decorated; but where should we be? Let the cobblers stick to their lasts. You that are sent to preach Christ, if you take to doing something else, and become philosophical, socialistic,

philanthropic, and all that, what is to become of the spiritual nature of men? Keep you to your work. Go and preach Christ to the people. I have not lost faith in the old gospel. No; my confidence in it grows as I see the speedy failure of all the quackeries of succeeding years. The methods of the modern school are a bottle of smoke. Christ crucified is the only remedy for sin. Keep to the gospel of "believe and live." "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life." If this gospel does not uplift the race, nothing will. This is the only medicine which the great Physician has given to us to administer to sin-sick souls. Keep to it. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." We want no advance, we dream of no improvement upon the gospel.

In closing, I would call your attention to two little words in the fifth verse. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ," allow me to put the next two words in capitals—"UNTO THEM." Read the thirty-fifth verse. "Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached UNTO HIM Jesus."

Somebody said to Mr. Moody—"How are we to get at the masses?" He replied, "Go for them." The expression is forcible, "Go for them." Go for them in the name of Christ. Go right at them. Do not only preach Christ, but preach Christ *unto them*. Preach Jesus to the individual man. It is the work of the church of God, as much as lieth in us to bring Christ home to the people's knowledge, thought, belief, conscience and heart. Preach it *unto them*. If I stand here and preach *before* you, what is the good of it? but if I preach *unto* you, there is practical use in it. When you

go out of this place, I pray you to look out your man or your woman, and speak unto him or unto her Jesus the Christ. Come to close dealings. I fear that some of you fathers have not yet prayed with your boys, and some of you mothers have not yet taken your girls apart and talked with them about eternal things. Have you? You say, "I am so retiring." Then retire and pray; but love your children enough to speak to them of Jesus. You sisters, have you spoken to your brothers about Jesus? Have some of you wives yet spoken to your ungodly husbands about the Christ? This is the point. If we will each one speak for our Lord, we shall see results that will perfectly astound us. If, during the next few months, this church would fully wake up, and if every member would feel, "I have something to do, and I must do it," we should then see a glorious harvest. When my brethren Fullerton and Smith hold special services in this place, as they will do in the beginning of November, you will help to get in the people and to crowd the place; and when they preach, you will pray and watch, and look up the inquirers, and we shall have great times. If you will go after people at their houses, and give them your own personal testimony in loving earnestness, the Holy Spirit will bless you. Oh, may God arouse us to this! I say again, I have not preached this morning half so much as I have prayed. For every word that I have spoken I have prayed two words silently to God. Oh, that the Lord would hear me, and bless us in an unusual degree! If the Lord will fill you with his Spirit, the opening of yonder front doors and your going out will be like the bursting of a bomb-shell in London. If you are all in earnest, your existence will be like the shining of the sun in the heavens. Oh, how

I long that God may be glorified! For his truth's sake I have been "abundantly filled with reproach"; but I would gladly accept a sevenfold baptism of it so that his kingdom would come. May the Lord make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the people! Amen, and Amen.

XVI.

NO COMPROMISE.

October 7, 1888.

"And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall see and his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."—GENESIS xxiv. 5—8.

GENESIS is both the book of beginnings and the book of dispensations. You know what use Paul makes of Sarah and Hagar, of Esau and Jacob, and the like. Genesis is, all through, a book instructing the reader in the dispensations of God towards man. Paul saith, in a certain place, "which things are an allegory," by which he did not mean that they were not literal facts, but that, being literal facts, they might also be used instructively as an allegory. So may I say of this chapter. It records what actually was said and done; but at the same time, it bears within it allegorical instruction with regard to heavenly things. The true minister of Christ is like this Eleazar of Damascus; he is sent to find a wife for his Master's Son. His great desire is, that

many shall be presented unto Christ in the day of his appearing, as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

The faithful servant of Abraham, before he started, communed with his master; and this is a lesson to us, who go on our Lord's errands. Let us, before we engage in actual service, see the Master's face, talk with him, and tell to him any difficulties which occur to our minds. Before we get to work, let us know what we are at, and on what footing we stand. Let us hear from our Lord's own mouth what he expects us to do, and how far he will help us in the doing of it. I charge you, my fellow-servants, never to go forth to plead with men for God until you have first pleaded with God for men. Do not attempt to deliver a message which you have not first of all yourself received by his Holy Spirit. Come out of the chamber of fellowship with God into the pulpit of ministry among men, and there will be a freshness and a power about you which none shall be able to resist. Abraham's servant spoke and acted as one who felt bound to do exactly what his master bade him, and to say what his master told him; hence his one anxiety was to know the essence and measure of his commission. During his converse with his master he mentioned one little point about which there might be a hitch; and his master soon removed the difficulty from his mind. It is about that hitch, which has occurred lately on a very large scale, and has upset a good many of my Master's servants, that I am going to speak this morning: may God grant that it may be to the benefit of his church at large!

I. Beginning our sermon, we will ask you, first, to THINK OF THE SERVANT'S JOYFUL BUT WEIGHTY ERRAND. It was a joyful errand: the bells of marriage were ring-

ing around him. The marriage of the heir should be a joyful event. It was an honorable thing for the servant to be entrusted with the finding of a wife for his master's son. Yet it was every way a most responsible business, by no means easy of accomplishment. Blunders might very readily occur before he was aware of it; and he needed to have all his wits about him, and something more than his wits, too, for so delicate a matter. He had to journey far, over lands without track or road; he had to seek out a family which he did not know, and to find out of that family a woman whom he did not know, who nevertheless should be the right person to be the wife of his master's son: all this was a great service.

The work this man undertook was *a business upon which his master's heart was set.* Isaac was now forty years old, and had shown no sign of marrying. He was of a quiet, gentle spirit, and needed a more active spirit to urge him on. The death of Sarah had deprived him of the solace of his life, which he had found in his mother, and had, no doubt, made him desire tender companionship. Abraham himself was old, and well stricken in years; and he very naturally wished to see the promise beginning to be fulfilled, that in Isaac should his seed be called. Therefore with great anxiety, which is indicated by his making his servant swear an oath of a most solemn kind, he gave him the commission to go to the old family abode in Mesopotamia, and seek for Isaac a bride from thence. Although that family was not all that could be desired, yet it was the best he knew of; and as some heavenly light lingered there, he hoped to find in that place the best wife for his son. The business was, however, a serious one which he committed to his servant. My brethren, this is nothing compared

with the weight which hangs on the true minister of Christ. All the Great Father's heart is set on giving to Christ a a church which shall be his beloved for ever. Jesus must not be alone: his church must be his dear companion. The Father would find a bride for the great Bridegroom, a recompense for the Redeemer, a solace for the Saviour: therefore he lays it upon all whom he calls to tell out the gospel, that we should seek souls for Jesus, and never rest till hearts are wedded to the Son of God. Oh, for grace to carry out this commission!

This message was the more weighty because of the person for whom the spouse was sought. Isaac was an extraordinary personage; indeed, to the servant he was unique. He was a man born according to promise, not after the flesh, but by the power of God; and you know how in Christ, and in all that are one with Christ, the life comes by the promise and the power of God, and springeth not of man. Isaac was himself the fulfillment of promise, and the heir of the promise. Infinitely glorious is our Lord Jesus as the Son of man! Who shall declare his generation? Where shall be found a helpmeet for him? a soul fit to be espoused unto him? Isaac had been sacrificed; he had been laid upon the altar, and although he did not actually die, his father's hand had unsheathed the knife wherewith to slay him. Abraham in spirit had offered up his son; and you know who he is of whom we preach, and for whom we preach, even Jesus, who has laid down his life a sacrifice for sinners. He has been presented as a whole burnt-offering unto God. Oh! by the wounds, and by the bloody sweat, I ask you where shall we find a heart fit to be wedded to him? How shall we find men and women

who can worthily recompense love so amazing, so divine, as that of him who died the death of the cross? Isaac had also been, in a figure, raised from the dead. To his father he was "as good as dead," as said the apostle; and he was given back to him from the dead. But our blessed Lord has actually risen from an actual death, and stands before us this day as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. Who shall be joined to this Conqueror? Who is fit to dwell in glory with this glorious One? One would have thought that every heart would aspire to such happiness, and leap in prospect of such peerless honor, and that none would shrink back except through a sense of great unworthiness. Alas! it is not so, though so it ought to be.

What a weighty errand have we to fulfil to find those who shall be linked for ever in holy union with the Heir of the promise, even the sacrificed and risen One! Isaac was everything to Abraham. Abraham would have said to Isaac, "All that I have is thine." So is it true of our blessed Lord, whom he hath made heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." What a dignity will be put upon any of you who are married to Christ! To what a height of eminence will you be uplifted by becoming one with Jesus! O preacher, what a work hast thou to do to-day, to find out those to whom thou shalt give the bracelet, and upon whose face thou shalt hang the jewel! To whom shall I say, "Wilt thou give thy heart to my Lord! Wilt thou have Jesus to be thy confidence, thy salvation, thine all in all? Art thou willing to become his that he may be thine?"

Said I not truly that it was a joyful but a weighty errand, when you think *what she must be to whom his*

master's son should be espoused? She must, at least, be willing and beautiful. In the day of God's power hearts are made willing. There can be no marriage to Jesus without a heart of love. Where shall we find this willing heart? Only where the grace of God has wrought it. Ah, then, I see how I may find beauty, too, among the sons of men! Marred as our nature is by sin, only the Holy Spirit can impart that beauty of holiness which will enable the Lord Jesus to see comeliness in his chosen. Alas! in our hearts there is an aversion to Christ, and an unwillingness to accept of him, and at the same time a terrible unfitness and unworthiness! The Spirit of God implants a love which is of heavenly origin, and renews the heart by a regeneration from above; and then we seek to be one with Jesus, but not till then. See, then, how our errand calls for the help of God himself.

Think what she will become who is to be married to Isaac? She is to be his delight; his loving friend and companion. She is to be partner of all his wealth; and specially is she to be a partaker in the great covenant promise, which was peculiarly entailed upon Abraham and his family. When a sinner comes to Christ, what does Christ make of him? His delight is in him: he communes with him; he hears his prayer, he accepts his praise; he works in him and with him, and glorifies himself in him. He makes the believing man joint-heir with himself of all that he has, and introduces him into the covenant treasure-house, wherein the riches and glory of God are stored up for his chosen. Ah, dear friends! it is a very small business in the esteem of some to preach the gospel; and yet, if God is with us, ours is more than angels' service. In a humble way you are telling of Jesus to your boys and girls in your classes; and some

will despise you as "only Sunday-school teachers;" but your work has a spiritual weight about it unknown to conclaves of senators, and absent from the counsels of emperors. Upon what you say, death, and hell, and worlds unknown are hanging. You are working out the destinies of immortal spirits, turning souls from ruin to glory, from sin to holiness.

> "'Tis not a work of small import
> Your loving care demands;
> But what might fill an angel's heart,
> And filled the Saviour's hands."

In carrying out his commission, *this servant must spare no exertion.* It would be required of him to journey to a great distance, having a general indication of direction, but not knowing the way. He must have divine guidance and protection. When he reached the place, he must exercise great common-sense, and at the same time a trustful dependence upon the goodness and wisdom of God. It would be a wonder of wonders if he ever met the chosen woman, and only the Lord could bring it to pass. He had all the care and the faith required. We have read the story of how he journeyed, and prayed, and pleaded. We should have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" but we see that the Lord Jehovah made him sufficient, and his mission was happily carried out. How can we put ourselves into the right position to get at sinners, and win them for Jesus? How can we learn to speak the right words? How shall we suit our teaching to the condition of their hearts? How shall we adapt ourselves to their feelings, their prejudices, their sorrows, and their temptations? Brethren, we who preach the gospel continually may well cry, "If thy

presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." To seek for pearls at the bottom of the sea is child's play compared with seeking for souls in this wicked London. If God be not with us, we may look our eyes out, and wear our tongues away in vain. Only as the Almighty God shall lead, and guide, and influence, and inspire, can we perform our solemn trust; only by divine help shall we joyfully come back, bringing with us the chosen of the Lord. We are the Bridegroom's friends, and we rejoice greatly in his joy, but we sigh and cry till we have found the chosen hearts in whom he will delight, whom he shall raise to sit with him upon his throne.

II. Secondly, I would have you CONSIDER THE REASONABLE FEAR WHICH IS MENTIONED. Abraham's servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land." This is a very serious, grave, and common difficulty. If the woman be not willing, nothing can be done; force and fraud are out of the question; there must be a true will, or there can be no marriage in this instance. Here was the difficulty: here was a will to be dealt with. Ah, my brethren! this is our difficulty still. Let me describe this difficulty in detail as it appeared to the servant, and appears to us.

She may not believe my report or be impressed by it. When I come to her, and tell her that I am sent by Abraham, she may look me in the face and say, "There be many deceivers nowadays." If I tell her that my master's son is surpassingly beautiful and rich, and that he would fain take her to himself, she may answer, "Strange tales and romances are common in these days; but the prudent do not quit their homes." Brethren, in our case this is a sad fact. The great evangelical prophet cried of old, "Who hath believed our report?"

We also cry in the same words. Men care not for the report of God's great love to the rebellious sons of men. They do not believe that the infinitely glorious Lord is seeking the love of poor, insignificant man, and to win it has laid down his life. Calvary, with its wealth of mercy, grief, love, and merit, is disregarded. Indeed, we tell a wonderful story, and it may well seem too good to be true; but it is sad indeed that the multitude of men go their ways after trifles, and count these grand realities to be but dreams. I am bowed down with dismay that my Lord's great love, which led him even to die for men, should hardly be thought worthy of your hearing, much less of your believing. Here is a heavenly marriage, and right royal nuptials placed within your reach; but with a sneer you turn aside, and prefer the witcheries of sin.

There was another difficulty: *she was expected to feel a love to one she had never seen.* She had only newly heard that there was such a person as Isaac, but yet she must love him enough to leave her kindred, and go to a distant land. This could only be because she recognized the will of Jehovah in the matter. Ah, my dear hearers, all that we tell you is concerning things not seen as yet; and here is our difficulty. You have eyes, and you want to see everything; you have hands, and you want to handle everything; but there is one whom you cannot see as yet, who has won our love because of what we believe concerning him. We can truly say of him, "Whom having not seen, we love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." I know that you answer our request thus: "You demand too much of us when you ask us to love a Christ we have never seen." I can

only answer, "It is even so: we do ask more of you than we expect to receive." Unless God the Holy Ghost shall work a miracle of grace upon your hearts, you will not be persuaded by us to quit your old associations, and join yourselves to our beloved Lord. And yet if you did come to him and love him, he would more than content you; for you would find in him rest unto your souls, and a peace which passeth all understanding.

Abraham's servant may have thought: *She may refuse to make so great a change* as to quit Mesopotamia for Canaan. She had been born and bred away there in a settled country, and all her associations were with her father's house; and to marry Isaac she must tear herself away. So, too, you cannot have Jesus, and have the world too: you must break with sin to be joined to Jesus. You must come away from the licentious world, the fashionable world, the scientific world, and from the (so-called) religious world. If you become a Christian, you must quit old habits, old motives, old ambitions, old pleasures, old boasts, old modes of thought. All things must become new. You must leave the things you have loved, and seek many of those things which you have hitherto despised. There must come to you as great a change as if you had died, and were made over again. You answer, "Must I endure all this for One whom I have never seen, and for an inheritance on which I have never set my foot?" It is even so. Although I am grieved that you turn away, I am not in the least surprised, for it is not given to many to see him who is invisible, or to choose the strait and narrow way which leadeth unto life. The man or woman who will follow God's messenger to be married to so strange a Bridegroom is a rare bird.

Moreover, it might be a great difficulty to Rebekah, if she had had any difficulties at all, to think that *she must henceforth lead a pilgrim life.* She would quit house and farm for tent and gipsy life. Abraham and Isaac found no city to dwell in, but wandered from place to place, dwelling alone, sojourners with God. Their outward mode of life was typical of the way of faith, by which men live in the world, and are not of it. To all intents and purposes Abraham and Isaac were out of the world, and lived on its surface without lasting connection with it. They were the Lord's men, and the Lord was their possession. He set himself apart for them, and they were set apart for him. Rebekah might well have said, "That will never do for me. I cannot outlaw myself. I cannot quit the comforts of a settled abode to ramble over the fields wherever the flocks may require me to roam." It does not strike the most of mankind that it would be a good thing to be in the world, and yet not to be of it. They are no strangers in the world, they long to be admitted more fully into its "society." They are not aliens here with their treasures in heaven, they long to have a good round sum on earth, and find their heaven in enjoying it themselves, and enriching their families. Earthworms as they are, the earth contents them. If any man becomes unworldly, and makes spiritual things his one object, they despise him as a dreamy enthusiast. Many men think that the things of religion are merely meant to be read of, and to be preached about; but that to live for them would be to spend a dreamy, unpractical existence. Yet the spiritual is, after all, the only real: the material is in deepest truth the visionary and unsubstantial. Still, when people turn away because of the hardness of holy warfare, and the spirituality of the

believing life, we are not astonished, for we hardly hoped it could be otherwise. Unless the Lord renews the heart, men will always prefer the bird-in-the-hand of this life to the bird-in-the-bush of the life to come.

Moreover, it might be that the woman *might not care for the covenant of promise.* If she had no regard for Jehovah and his revealed will, she was not likely to go with the man, and enter upon marriage with Isaac. He was the heir of the promises, the inheritor of the covenant privileges which the Lord by oath had promised. His chosen would become the mother of that chosen seed in whom God had ordained to bless the world throughout all the ages, even the Messiah, the seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head.

Peradventure the woman might not see the value of the covenant, nor appreciate the glory of the promise. The things we have to preach of, such as life everlasting, union with Christ, resurrection from the dead, reigning with him for ever and ever, seem to the dull hearts of men to be as idle tales. Tell them of a high interest for their money, of large estates to be had for a venture, or of honors to be readily gained, and inventions to be found out, they open all their eyes and their ears, for here is something worth knowing; but the things of God, eternal, immortal, boundless—these are of no importance to them. They could not be induced to go from Ur to Canaan for such trifles as eternal life, and heaven, and God.

So you see our difficulty. Many disbelieve altogether, and others cavil and object. A greater number will not even listen to our story; and of those who do listen, most are careless, and others dally with it, and postpone the serious consideration. Alas! we speak to unwilling ears.

III. In the third place, I would ENLARGE UPON HIS VERY NATURAL SUGGESTION. This prudent steward said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: *Must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?*" If she will not come to Isaac, shall Isaac go down to her? This is the suggestion of the present hour: if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down his teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the church, shall not the church go down to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted, and come out from among sinners, and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it, and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us. Let us have a Christian world.

To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular; let us drop them out. Use the old phrases, so as to please the obstinately orthodox, but give them new meanings, so as to win philosophical infidels, who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of unpleasant truths, and moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible revelation: say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes, and that the books which have been so long had in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith, and bring in the new doubt; for the times are altered, and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous, and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant baptism, and so that great sentence, "Ye must be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored,

faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with, to make way for entertainments, and socialism, and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans. It is true, with the same breath they extol Oliver Cromwell; but then 1888 is not 1648. What was good and great three hundred years ago is mere cant to-day. That is what "modern thought" is telling us; and under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised, and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday; behave yourself; and above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible, and you will be all right. Be fashionable, and think with those who profess to be scientific—this is the first and great commandment of the modern school; and the second is like unto it—do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbors. Thus is Isaac going down into Padan-aram: thus is the church going down to the world.

Men seem to say—It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again, and become followers of Christ, is a long process; let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions; that will do: don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the gospel, but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along; if you do not believe anything, no matter; your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith. "But," say you, "nobody talks so." Possibly they do

not use the same words, but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion; this the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers, who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretence of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the church to the world, and so include a larger area within its bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make houses of prayer to approximate to the theatre; they turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays—in fact, they exchange the temple for the theatre, and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men. Is it not so, that the Lord's-day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord's house either a joss-house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me! the hedges are broken down, the walls are levelled, and to many there is, henceforth, no church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work.

This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform himself, his people, and his Word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal.

IV. In the fourth place, NOTICE HIS MASTER'S OUTSPOKEN, BELIEVING REPUDIATION OF THE PROPOSAL. He says, shortly and sharply, "*Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*" The Lord Jesus Christ heads that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing his disciples, he says, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus, and those who are in him, constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts; yea, deadly to our noblest life. A voice from heaven cries, "Bring not my son thither again." Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage; but let their children come out, and be separate, and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them.

Notice how Abraham states the question. In effect, he argues it thus: *this would be to forego the divine order.* "For," says Abraham, "the Lord God of heaven took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred." What, then, if he brought Abraham out, is Isaac to return? This cannot be. Hitherto the way of God with his church has been to sever a people from the world to be his elect—a people formed for himself, who shall show forth his praise. Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom he did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of that fact, and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion. If God had meant to bless the family at Padan-aram by letting his chosen ones dwell among them, why did he call Abraham out at all? If Isaac may do good by dwelling there, why did Araham leave? If there is no need of a separate church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great

account? Brethren, there are two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—and the difference will be maintained even to the end; neither must we ignore the distinction to please men.

For Isaac to go down to Nahor's house for a wife *would be placing God second to a wife.* Abraham begins at once with a reference to Jehovah, "the God of heaven," for Jehovah was everything to him, and to Isaac also. Isaac would never renounce his walk with the living God that he might find a wife. Yet this apostasy is common enough nowadays. Men and women who profess godliness will quit what they profess to believe in order to get richer wives or husbands for themselves or their children. This mercenary conduct is without excuse. "Better society" is the cry—meaning more wealth and fashion. To the true man God is first—yea, all in all; but God is placed at the fag-end, and everything else is put before him by the base professor. In the name of God I call upon you who are faithful to God and to his truth, to stand fast, whatever you lose, and turn not aside, whatever you might gain. Count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We want Abraham's spirit within us, and we shall have that when we have Abraham's faith.

Abraham felt that this would be *to renounce the covenant promise.* See how he puts it: "The God that took me from my father's house sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Are they, then, to leave the land, and go back to the place from which the Lord had called them? Brethren, we also are heirs of the promise of things not seen as yet. For the sake of this we walk by faith, and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham

dwelt among the Canaanites; but we are of a distinct race: we are born with a new birth, live under different laws, and act from different motives. If we go back to the ways of worldlings, and are numbered with them, we have renounced the covenant of our God, the promise is no longer ours, and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the church says, "I will be as the world," she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came, and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the church into its arms: then shall come some overwhelming judgment, and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire. The covenant promise and the covenant heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord.

Besides, dear friends, *no good can come of trying to conform to the world.* Suppose the servant's policy could have been adopted, and Isaac had gone down to Nahor's house, what would have been the motive? To spare Rebekah the pain of separating from her friends, and the trouble of travelling. If those things could have kept her back, what would she have been worth to Isaac? The test of separation was wholesome, and by no means ought to be omitted. She is a poor wife who would not take a journey to reach her husband. And all the converts that the church will ever make by softening down its doctrine, and by becoming worldly, will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a

great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness, and we read that "the mixed multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough, but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring. Why is there such spiritual death to-day? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers, and especially eagerness to include respectable people, has adulterated many churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice, and fond of silly amusements. These are the people who despise a prayer-meeting, but rush to see "living waxworks" in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard, and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the church! No, no; if Isaac is to have a wife worthy of him, she will come away from Laban and the rest, and she will not mind a journey on camel-back. True converts are never daunted by truth or holiness—these, in fact, are the things which charm them.

Besides, Abraham felt that *there could be no reason for taking Isaac down there,* for the Lord would assuredly find him a wife. Abraham said, "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." Are you afraid that preaching the gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music, and architecture, and flowers, and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power, and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many.

Brethren beloved, there are many things which I

might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the worship of this congregation. I long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes hither to gratify his eye with art, or his ear with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified, and the simplicity of the gospel; yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years? I have shown you nothing but the cross, the cross without the flowers of oratory, the cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement, the cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank, the cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. It is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself, and afterwards to eternal life!

In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great truth, that the gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners, and build up and sustain a church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the gospel still: only let it be the gospel in its purity. This grand old sword will cleave a man's chine, and split a rock in halves. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard, and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades, and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glo-

rious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way.

V. And now, fifthly, observe HIS RIGHTEOUS ABSOLUTION OF HIS SERVANT. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again."

When we lie a-dying, if we have faithfully preached the gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it: we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool or the politician in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! our Master will give us full absolution, even if few be gathered in, so long as we have been true to him. "If the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath; only bring not my son thither again." Do not try the dodges which debase religion. Keep to the simple gospel; and if the people are not converted by it, you will be clear.

My dear hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would not belie my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and faithfulness, but he is not responsible for success or non-success. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand truth that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers, and if I persuade and

entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life; if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads. When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told out his message of free grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say: "I am clear, I am clear!"

It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's truth, so far as I know it, and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my testimony I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith, and even from those who associate with them.

What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ, and his gospel, and his rule, it is their own concern. If Rebekah had not come to Isaac, she would have lost her place in the holy line. My beloved hearer, will you have Jesus Christ or not? He has come into the world to save sinners, and he casts out none. Will you accept him? Will you trust him? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Will you believe him? Will you be baptized into his name? If so, salvation is yours; but if not, he himself hath said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Oh, do not expose yourselves to that damnation! Or, if you are set upon it; then, when the great white throne shall be seen in yonder skies, and the day of wrath has come, do me the justice to acknowledge that I bade you flee to Jesus, and that I did not amuse you with novel theories. I have brought neither flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music to please your ears, but I have set Christ crucified

before you, and bidden you *believe and live*. If you refuse to accept the substitution of Christ, you have refused your own mercies. Clear me in that day of all complicity with the novel inventions of deluded men. As for my Lord, I pray of him grace to be faithful to the end, both to his truth, and to your souls. Amen.

XVII.

A PARADOX.

November 4, 1888.

"When I am weak, then am I strong."—2 CORINTHIANS xii. 10.

THE expression is paradoxical, and seems somewhat singular; yet it was the experience of the apostle Paul, a man of calm spirit, by no means fanciful, a wise man, and far removed from a fanatic. It was the experience of one who was led of the Spirit of God, and therefore it was a gracious experience: the experience of one who was a father in Israel, who could safely bid us to be imitators of him, even as he imitated the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore it was a safe experience. If we are weak, so was Paul; and if, like him, we are strong in our weakness, we shall be in the best of company. If the same things be seen in us which were wrought in the apostle of the Gentiles, we may join with him in glorying in infirmities, because the power of Christ doth rest upon us, and we may count ourselves happy that with such a saint we can cry, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

I. Perhaps I can expound the text best if I first TURN IT THE OTHER WAY UP, and use it as a warning.

When I am strong, then am I weak. Perhaps, while thinking of the text thus turned inside out, we shall be getting light upon it to be used when we view it with the

right side outwards, and see that *when we are weak, then we are strong.*

I am quite sure that some people think themselves very strong, and are not so. Their proud consciousness of fancied strength is the indication of a terrible weakness. We have among us *certain persons who think that they can do all that is needful for their own salvation* whenever they please to do so. They can perform all sorts of good works, or at least quite enough to carry them to heaven. Their first idea is that they are to be saved by their own doings; and they really expect to be so saved. They may admit that they have a few faults and flaws in their character; but these are so trifling as to be hardly worth mentioning, and God Almighty is too merciful to be very particular. Their lives have been excellent, their tempers amiable, their manners courteous, their spirit generous, and they quite believe that by keeping on at the same pace they will win the prize: if they do not, who will? The ship of their character is in fine condition; they have no leaks which the pumps cannot keep down; their sails are not rent, and they hope to sail into the haven of peace with a glorious cargo of merit, having an abundant entrance, and hearing a loud "Well done!" Ah, my friend! that consciousness of legal strength is a mere delusion, and it will have to be taken out of you. There is no going to heaven that way—by self and the works of self. Your error is a common one, but it is fatal. I have seen many epitaphs of persons, placed by the mistaken kindness of friends upon their tombstones, which I felt sure would have been sufficient to shut them out of heaven if they had been true. These departed worthies do not appear to have been sinners at all: their virtues were superla-

tive, their faults non-existent. Such wonderful people would appear from their epitaphs to have flown up to the gates of heaven upon the wings of their own virtues, and to have entered there without a passport of mercy, as burgesses by their own right of the New Jerusalem. I wonder how they would behave themselves in heaven. if they were really admitted there! All the rest are singing, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; but these needed no washing, and so they would be likely to strike up a little song by themselves, and sing, "Our robes never needed washing; we kept them white as snow." What a discord that would create in the music of the skies! What a division of character and feeling would be found among celestials! I cannot see how there could be any harmony of sentiment amongst sinners saved by grace and righteous ones who owed nothing to mercy, nothing to the atoning sacrifice.

No, my strong and virtuous hearer, you are under a grave delusion. There is a great similarity between your talk and the talk of that religious individual who went up to the temple in our Saviour's days, and, standing before the thrice-holy God, dared to say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." He was not justified that day, nor will you be. A poor tax-gatherer, despised by himself, and an off-cast from his own people, stood in the temple at the same time, and all that he dared to say was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This unworthy sinner went to his house justified, while the other worthy person was not accepted. If you think yourselves strong enough to procure heaven by your own efforts, you are ignorantly insulting the cross of Christ, for you seem to insinuate that your virtues

can avail you without Jesus. If you really mean this, there is more venom of rebellion against God in your self-righteousness than in the outward vice of those who make no pretence to godliness. For you to put your works in the place of Jesus is a blasphemy against the Saviour's blood and righteousness. Why needed Christ to die if men could save themselves? Why need he bleed upon the cross if your merits will suffice to gain you a place among the blessed? There is a fatal weakness in the claim of that man who thinks himself strong enough to force his own passage to the throne of God; that weakness lies in the pride which insults the Crucified, the disloyalty which prefers itself to the royal Saviour.

> "Perish the virtue, as it ought—abhorred,
> And the fool with it who insults his Lord."

Listen to me a moment, and quit your fancied strength: you, my hearer, cannot keep the law of God, for you have already broken it. How can you preserve a crystal vase entire when you have already dashed it to atoms? You must now be saved by the merits and the strength of another, or not at all; for your own merit is out of the question, through past failure. That strength of yours, upon which you dote so much, is perfect weakness. May the Lord show you this, and make you faint at heart on that account; for then you shall be strong, with real and saving strength! Now your imaginary strength is making you really weak, and that boasted merit of yours is shutting you out from true righteousness. He that is strong in the notion of merit is weak even to utter folly before the God of truth.

"Yes," we hear you reply, "there is a gospel way of

salvation. We know that there is, for you preach it continually. You tell us that men must repent, and believe the gospel; that they must be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and must both overcome sin, and follow after holiness." Yes, I do say all that; but what do you say to it? Is it really so that you find here a ground for your own strength? Do you say, "*I feel that I can repent whenever I please, and believe in Jesus when I choose?*" Ah! then I must assure you that when you are strong in that way, you are weak. I never yet knew anybody repent who gloried in his power to repent; I never yet knew a man heart-broken for sin who boasted that he could break his own heart when and where he pleased. "What!" cries one, "surely I can believe in Jesus Christ when I please!" I have not denied that statement, have I? But I tell you that your notion of power to believe is your weakness; and I would rather by half hear you cry, with deep solemnity, "Oh, that God would give me faith! Lord, help my unbelief!" Your sense of inability to believe in Christ would be a far better token for good, in my judgment, than your present flippant talk about believing when you like. Men who are in earnest talk not so: whatever their strength may be, they find it little enough in the hour of need. I beg to assure you that I have never known a man believe in Jesus who trusted that he could so believe; for his trust in his own believing kept him from trusting to Jesus; but I have known many a poor, struggling soul lie at the cross-foot, and say, "Lord, help me to look to Jesus, and live;" and God has helped him to give that look in which there is eternal life. While he has been praying, his prayer, yes, his weeping prayer, has had in it that very look to Jesus for which he was

pleading. His sense of inability to believe has made him look to Jesus for believing, and he has found it in him.

You say that you can turn your heart towards God whenever you please. I am not going into any dispute with you about your assertion, nor the doctrine, which is supposed to support you in your profession of strength; but I will say this, that your idea of having personal strength, with which to purify and renew your own heart—your idea that you can create in yourself a right spirit—your idea that you can raise yourself from your death in sin—is to me a prophecy of much evil for yourself. Where self is conspicuous, I see an omen of mischief, I see no good in this fine opinion of yourself; but if I heard you cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God"—if I heard you say, "Lord, quicken me out of my death in sin"—if I saw you lying down before the Most High, and praying, "Turn me, and I shall be turned"—I should have a far brighter hope of you. In your weakness you would become strong; but in your present strength, I am sure I see a great weakness, which is likely to be your ruin. O dear hearts, your best friend does not lie within your own doors. Your hope for better things shines yonder at the right hand of God, where the living Saviour has all power given to him in heaven and in earth. Sinner, if you grow no sweeter flowers than the dunghill of your own nature can nourish, you will die amid poisonous weeds. If you never drink of better water than the filthy well of your own heart will yield, you will perish of thirst, or of a deadly draught. Another, and a better helper than one born in your house, must come this way. Help must be laid upon one that is mighty, exalted of the Lord out of the people, and en-

dowed with divine power and Godhead, for only such a Saviour, infinitely good and great, can save a soul so lost as yours. When you get down, down, down, into utter weakness, then you will be strong, because then you will rest upon the Lord's salvation; but as you are strong in your thoughts of yourself, you are kept from Jesus, and are weakness itself.

So far I have spoken by way of warning to unconverted people.

I desire now to say a word to those who profess to be Christians, and, let us hope, are so; but they are, in a measure, erring in the same way as those to whom I have spoken. They are remarkably strong: at least, in their own esteem they are very Samsons, although others fear that the Philistines will capture them. By this token may they know their own weakness—even by this, that they think themselves strong.

First, *many are wonderfully strong as to knowledge.* They know almost everything. If in any department they are a little short, they make up for it by knowing so much more in another direction. If they are too narrow here, they overlap there. They are knowing men, and need no man to tell them so. They are instructed in the faith from pole to pole: they know both that which is afar off, and that which is nigh. An argument is a pleasure to them. They go into company where the eternal verities are denied, and feel a delight in taking sides. They will sit where the vital simplicities of God's word are set up like marks for boys to throw at; and they like the amusement, for it exercises their knowing faculty, and gives them a chance of showing their mental power. They are not children, but quite able to think for themselves. They are not credulous, but amazingly

clear-headed and cultured. I have noticed these fine gentlemen have been the first to deny the faith, and to fall into all manner of heresies. Do you wonder? Those who are so very sure are always the most uncertain. I could instance some that had such confidence in themselves that they would have argued with the very fiend of hell on any question, for they felt that not even Satanic craft could conquer them; but at this present moment the prince of darkness holds them in his power. They hold no controversy with the devil now, for they are very largely agreed with him in assailing the gospel of God's grace. They have gone entirely over to the denial of everything that is gracious and holy and scriptural, and the main cause of their apostasy is their own invincible self-confidence. They were so strong that they became weaker than others. O brethren, when we are very wise in our own esteem, we are bordering upon fools, even if we have not already entered into that company. When we tremblingly sit at Jesus' feet, to learn everything fresh, and fresh from him; when we shudder at anything that questions his Deity, or lowers his sacrifice; when we shut up a book and cast it from us, because we feel that it pollutes us with unbelief—then are we wise and strong. When the Word of the Lord is enough, then are we in the way of wisdom and strength. The man of one book is proverbially a terrible mon; but the man of ten thousand books, who can baffle all adversaries and foil all foes, shall soon lie wounded on the plain, if he be not slain outright. Let us take heed unto ourselves, that we fall not through being headstrong, or strong in the head, which is much the same thing.

Again, I have noticed some professedly Christian people *wonderfully strong through experience*. Their experi-

ence has been very extensive, and the knowledge it has brought them they consider to be specially profound, and, consequently, they are not afraid of temptation, for they feel that they are too wise to be entrapped. They are so experienced now, that things which young people ought not to think of, they can do with impunity—so they foolishly dream. They can go just so far, and then stop, for they are fitted with the patent brakes of prudence. They are such good mountain climbers that they can stand on the edge of a precipice, and look over, and even hang over, without fear of their ever being giddy and falling over. Of course they would not advise other people to go quite so far as they may safely go; but then, what is temptation to other men is no temptation to them. Their vessel is so tight and trim, and they understand navigation so perfectly, that they rather like a tempest than not, just to show how well their vessel can behave in a storm. Ah me! When you next read the list of wrecks, you may expect to see the name of their ship among the castaways. Old birds may not be caught with chaff, but they can be shot with a gun. No one is out of danger, and no one is more in danger than the man who is carnally secure. Those who feel that their experience, be it what it may, only teaches them that the farther they can keep from temptation the better, these are in a better state. When experience drives us to pray with emphasis the prayer "Lead us not into temptation," then it is working aright. In the idea of strength and wisdom lurks an awfully perilous weakness; but in a sense of personal weakness dwells a real strength. If you are extremely jealous, conscientious, and watchful, many will tell you how weak you are; but you are, in reality, a strong man, because of your fear to

encounter evil influences: in that fear lies one essential element of holy strength. While he that rather braves temptation, because he feels so strong, shall find, it may be to his everlasting sorrow, how great his weakness is; he that shuns the appearance of evil, because of conscious weakness, shall find therein his security and strength. Oh, let none of us, because we are getting gray, suppose that we are invulnerable to sin! Let us not dream that because we have been church-members so many years, or even because we have sustained a long and useful ministry, we are therefore beyond gun-shot of the enemy, or without necessity to seek daily strength for daily duty. My brethren, we cannot perform the smallest duty aright apart from the help of God; neither can we be secure against even the grossest sin, apart from the perpetual guard of him that keepeth Israel. If we, in our self-conceit, write ourselves down among the mightiest, and forget our entire dependence upon heavenly grace, we may be left to prove, by unhappy experience, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Let us note another point. I have known certain Christian people who thought themselves *singularly strong in the matter of wisdom and prudence.* They have been gifted with clear insight and a measure of shrewdness, and have, therefore, felt that their judgment on most subjects was that of an umpire. Have you ever noticed that the raw material of a very grossly foolish person is a cautious individual? The cunning are the readiest dupes when craft is busy in taking its prey. So, too, a wise man is needed if there is to be exhibited the worst form of folly. If we were called upon to select a man who, as to his life as a whole, perpetrated

the greatest folly, we should mention Solomon. Yet he was the wisest of men. Yes, the cream of wisdom, when curdled, makes the worst of folly. Was ever man so insanely enthusiastic in vain pursuits as this master of all knowledge? Then, brethren, whenever we feel sure of our own superior intelligence, let us suspect ourselves of weakness. Let the same fear come upon us when we feel sure about our way, so sure that we think we need not pray about it, or in any manner wait for divine direction. Beware of those matters in which you think you cannot err. Men who have been wise in great difficulties have blundered fearfully where all was simple. The Israelites thought that the men who came to them begging for a league of brotherhood could not deceive them. It must be safe to be on good terms with these interesting strangers. Why, look, their shoes are well-nigh worn from their feet, and patched and clouted to the last degree! Their clothes, which we doubt not were new when they left their distant homes, are now threadbare, and their biscuit, which they took fresh from the oven, is stale with age. It is evident, upon the face of it, that they must have come from a very remote part of the world, and therefore a treaty with them will not interfere with the divine command. There can be no need to pray about a case so clear. Thus the Gibeonites overreached them, as we also shall be overreached when we are so exceedingly sure of our course. Brethren, let us not be so wise as to dispense with our heavenly Counsellor and Guide. Would not that be the height of madness? It is a salutary thing to feel that your case requires you to trust the helm of your ship with the divine Pilot. It is even a blessed thing to feel that you are shut up to faith, and must by absolute trust in God throw

the responsibility of your action upon him. I will give you an instance. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is placed in a peculiar position. God has commanded him to take his son Isaac, and offer him for a sacrifice. Here is a terrible puzzle. Here was enough to stagger any human mind. Surely it could not be right for a father to slay his son! How could it be wise to kill the son in whom all the promises of God were vested? The more you think of the case from a father's standpoint, the more it will perplex you. Abraham could not make any thing out of it by his judgment, but he met it all by faith. All that he could say to Isaac was, "My son, God will provide himself a Lamb." He was thus saying to himself, "The Lord will get me out of this difficulty." He had no wisdom with which to conjecture how the affair would end: he had to cease from guessing, and just trust in his God. Abraham made no mistake in this. Oh that we could do the same! Observe that same Abraham when he goes down to Egypt. His wife is exceedingly beautiful, and he fears that the king of Egypt will kill him in order to obtain his wife; what will he do? I can see a great many ways in which he might have warded off that evil. He was not called upon to go to Egypt at all, if he thereby risked his wife's honor; or, if he must go, he should have gone boldly, acknowledging his wife, and trusting both her and himself with the Lord. Instead of that, the patriarch begins by inducing Sarah to join with him in equivocation. "Say thou art my sister." She was in some sense his sister; but it was using a word in a double sense for a deceitful purpose, and it was a pitiful thing for Abraham to do. Nor was it a prudent scheme after all: in fact it was the cause of the very trouble which it sought to

prevent. Sarah would not have been taken away from Abraham at all if Pharaoh had known that she was his wife; so that the wise was snared by his own craftiness. The Lord graciously delivered him, but in that very act left a root of bitterness behind to be his future plague. Pharaoh gave to him women-servants, and I doubt not among the rest was Hagar, who became the object of sin, and the source of sorrow to the household. In the fancied strength of Abraham, by which he emulated the craft of other Orientals, he displayed his weakness; but in the other case, where no wit or wisdom could assist him, he cast himself upon the Lord, and in his weakness he behaved like the grand man that he really was. Brothers, let us confess ourselves fools, that we may be wise; for otherwise we shall fall into that other condition, of professing ourselves wise, and becoming fools. Let us ignore our wisdom, even if we have any. God alone is wise: he that trusteth either his own heart or head is a fool. Lean not to thine own understanding, but lean wholly upon the Lord; so shalt thou be established.

Further, dear friends, *we shall often find that our strength will lie in patience*—in extreme weakness which yields itself up to the will of God without the power or will to murmur. We sang in our hymn just now—

> "And when it seems no chance nor change
> From grief can set me free,
> Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
> And, patient, waits on thee."

I am sure that in reference to power, either to do or to suffer rightly, we are not strong when we compliment ourselves upon our ability; and we are strong when,

under a sense of absolute inability, we depend wholly upon God. That sermon preached in the glory of our oratory turned out to be mere husks for swine; while that discourse which we delivered in weakness, with a humble hope that God would use it, proved to be royal meat for the Lord's chosen. That work which you performed in the vigor of your unquestioned talent came to nothing, while that quiet act which you washed with your tears, and perfumed with your prayers, will live and yield you sheaves. Creature strength brings forth nothing which has life in it: only the seed which the Creator puts into the hand of our weakness will produce a harvest. It is well to be nothing: it is better still to be "less than nothing." We ought to dread a sense of capacity, for it will render us incapable; but a sense of utter incapacity apart from God is a fit preparation for being used by the Lord. "Unto them that have no might he increaseth strength."

So it is in bearing as well as acting. If we say concerning sickness, "I shall never be impatient. I can bear it like a stoic." What of that? You will then have done no more than many have done before you, with no great gain to themselves or to others. But if, bowing your head before the Lord, you wait his sovereign will, and say, "Lord help me. If thy left hand shall smite me, let thy right hand sustain me. I am willing to drink this bitter cup, saying, 'Not as I will, but as thou wilt.' Lord, help me!"—you shall bear up triumphantly, and come out of the furnace refined, to the praise and the glory of your God. When you fancy that you are strong to suffer, you will fail; but in conscious weakness you will be enabled to play the man.

I have now done with the text, as I have turned it

upside down. May God bless it to any here who feel high and mighty, by causing it to put them in their proper place.

II. Now, let us take our text THE RIGHT WAY UPWARDS. "When I am weak, then am I strong." "When" and "then" are the two pivots of the text—the hinges upon which it turns.

"*When* I am weak." What does that mean? It means when the believer is *consciously weak*, when he painfully feels, and distinctly recognizes that he is weak, then he is strong. In truth, we are always weak, whether we know it or not; but when we not only believe this to be the fact, but see it to be the fact—then it is that we are strong. When it is forced home upon us, that we are less than nothing and vanity—when our very soul echoes and re-echoes that word, "Without me ye can do nothing"—then it is that we are strong.

When he is *growingly weak*. Yes, for he sees his own weakness more and more clearly as he advances: as he grows stronger in faith he is much more conscious of the weakness of the flesh. I talked about my weakness from this platform five-and-twenty years ago; but I stand here and tremble under it now to a far greater degree than I did in my younger and more vigorous time. I knew it three-and-thirty years ago, when I first spoke to you, but I did not know it as I know it now. I was then weak, and I owned it: but I am now weak, and groan about it almost involuntarily. Yes, and I sometimes sing because of my weakness, learning to glory in my infirmities because the power of Christ doth rest upon me. When we are growingly weak, when we become weaker and weaker, when we seem to faint into a deeper swoon than ever as to our own strength, till death is

written upon every power that we once thought we had, and we feel that we can do absolutely nothing apart from the Holy Spirit, then we are strong indeed.

We are strong, too, when we feel *painfully weak*. It is well when we mourn because we are so weak, and cry out to ourselves, "My weakness, my weakness, woe unto me! When I would do good, evil is present with me. When I would rise to heaven, the body of this death detains me. I would do great things for God, but I have no might. Alas for my weakness!" At such a time we are really rising, and are bringing most glory to God. These are growing pains—agonies such as none know but the truly and growingly spiritual. A painful weakness is strength. It may seem a paradox, but it is true.

We are strong when we are *contritely weak*. When we confess that much of our weakness is our fault—a weakness which we ought to have overcome—even then we have in that weakness a real strength. The sort of weakness that makes a man say, "I cannot be any stronger, I am doing my best," is not strength, but folly; but that weakness which makes you lament your failures and deplore your shortcomings, has in it a holy stimulus and force. That weakness which makes you dissatisfied with all you are and all you do, is goading you on to better and stronger things. If you feel that even when most earnest you have not prayed as you could wish, there is evidently strength in your desires, and your desires are prayers. If after any service you pour forth showers of penitential tears because the service was imperfect, there is evidently a strong soul of obedience within you. When you can neither repent, nor believe, nor love as you wish to do, you are repenting, believing, and loving with a strength which is more true than apparent. It is the

will with which we act which is the strength of the action; and when the will is so powerful that it makes us mourn because we cannot find how to perform its bidding, then are we strong according to the divine measurement of strength. Contrite weakness is spiritual strength.

When a man is *thoroughly weak*—not only partially, but altogether weak—then is he strong. When apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, he is utter weakness, and nothing more—then it is that he is strong. Let me persuade you to make a full confession of weakness to the Lord. Say, "Lord, I cannot do what I ought to do: I cannot do what I want to do: I cannot do what I used to do: I cannot do what other people do: I cannot do what I mean to do: I cannot do what I am sure I shall do: I cannot do what I feel impelled to do; and over this sinful weakness I mourn." Then add, "Lord, I long to serve thee perfectly, yet I cannot do it. Unless thou help me I can do nothing aright. There will be no good in my actions, my words, my feelings, or my desires, unless thou continue to fill me with thine own holy energy. Lord, help me! Lord, help me! Brother, you are strong while you plead in that fashion. You can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth you; and he will strengthen you, now that you are emptied of self. How true it is, "When I am weak, then am I strong!"

I have brought out the "when." Now lend me your ears and hearts just for a minute, while I bring out the "then." "*Then* am I strong." When is that?

Why, a man is strong when he is consciously weak, because now he has reached the truth. He really is weak; and if he does not know that he is so, he is under the influence of a falsehood. Now a lie is a thing of

weakness. Lying strength is all fluff and foam: a mere appearance, a mockery, a delusion. Nothing hinders from getting the reality like contentment with a mere appearance. The true heart is heartily sick of shows and shams, and it cries, "Lord, help me to get rid of these shadows! Help me to come at the truth! Help me to deal with realities!" When you are made to feel your utter weakness you are on sure ground of truth—unpleasant truth, no doubt, yet sure truth. You are now on safe ground touching fundamentals, and making sure work. What you now do will be soundly done. All the while that we keep building on a sandy made-up foundation, we are piling up that which will, in all probability, come down even faster than we put it up. While the rotten rubbish remains on the spot, you cannot do anything worth doing; but if that accumulation can be carted away, there will seem to be a great hole, but you will get down to the real bottom, and get a foundation; and then what you build will be worth putting up, because it will stand. Therefore, a man becomes strong when he is consciously weak, because he is on the truth, and is not being flattered by false hopes.

Next, he will be strong because *he will only go with a commission to support him.* He will not be eager to run without being sent. He says within himself, when he proposes a service to himself, "No, I am too weak to undertake anything of my own head." He will wait for a call. This is not the kind of man that will climb up into a pulpit, and from a dizzy brain pour out nonsense. He will not crave to lead, for he feels that he needs much help even to follow. He feels himself too weak to set up for a master in Israel. This is not the kind of man that will venture into argument with sceptics for the fun of

for the glory of the thing. Oh, no; he is too weak for that. He says, "If I am called to defend the faith, I will do it in God's strength, hoping that it will be given me in the same hour what I shall speak. If I am called to preach I will preach, and nobody shall stop me; for the Lord will be with my mouth. But, you see, until the man is conscious of his own weakness, he will run without being sent; and there is nobody so weak as that man. No one so weak as the man who has no commission from God, and no promise of help from him. Such a man will be thinking of this, and thinking of that, and running for this, that, and the other, because he has a lot of waste energy which he wants to use somewhere or somehow. Could we once see him consciously weak we should hear him say, "Here am I, send me!" in answer to the question, "Whom shall I send?" Then he would not go a warfare at his own charges, but he would draw upon the all-sufficiency of God, and find himself equal to every emergency.

The man who is consciously weak is strong, next, because *of the holy caution that he will be sure to use.* He will be on his guard, because he does not feel able to cope with adversaries. He will ask for a convoy for his little barque, for he is aware of pirates. If this weak man has to pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, depend upon it he will carry in his hand the weapon of All-prayer, like a drawn sword. The man that has strength goes hurrying on over hedge and ditch, and soon comes into mischief; but the consciously weak pilgrim keeps to the high-road, and travels carefully; and hence he is strong. Fear is a notably good housekeeper: she may not keep a luxurious table, but she always locks the doors at night, and takes care of all under her charge.

Holy caution begets prudence; and prudence, by fostering vigor, and crying for heavenly aid, becomes strength.

Moreover, when a man is weak, then is he strong, because *he is sure to pray,* and prayer is power. The man who laments his weakness is sure to cry to the strong for strength. The more his weakness presses on him, the more will he pray. While he can do without his God he will do without his God; but when his own weakness becomes utter and entire, and he is ready to perish, then he turns unto his Lord, and is made strong. The utterly weak cry out unto God as nobody else does. He is too weak to play at praying: he groans, he sighs, he weeps. In his abject weakness he prevails, as Jacob did. He wrestled all night; but now at last the angel has touched the hollow of his thigh, and made his sinew shrink, and he cannot wrestle any longer. What will he do now? He falls; and as he falls he grasps his antagonist, and holds him fast, crying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." As much as to say, "I cannot wrestle with thee, I cannot try another fall; but I can and will hold thee fast. The dead weight of my weakness makes me hold thee as an anchor holds a ship. I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

The weaker a man is in himself the stronger he is in prayer, if he makes use of his weakness as an appealing argument—"Lord, if I were strong, thou mightest leave me. Do not leave me, for I am weakness itself. I am the feeblest child in all thy family, leave me not, neither forsake me. If thou leavest any, leave not thy poor dying infant, that can hardly wail out its griefs." Weak-

ness, as a plea with God in prayer, becomes a source of strength.

When we are weak we are strong, again, because then *we are driven away from self to God.* All strength is in God, and it is well to come to the one solitary storehouse and source of might. There is no power apart from God. As long as you and I look to the creature, we are looking to a cracked, broken cistern, that holds no water; but when we know that it is broken, and that there is not a drop of water in it, then we hasten to the great fountain and well-head. While we rest in any measure upon self, or the creature, we are standing with one foot on the sand; but when we get right away from human nature because we are too weak to have the least reliance upon self whatever, then we have both feet on the rock, and this is safe standing. If thou believest in the living God, and if all thine own existence is by believing, thou livest at a mighty rate. But if thou believest in God in a measure, and if, at the same time, thou trustest thyself in a measure, thou art living at a dying rate, and half the joy which is possible to thee is lost. Thou art taking in bread with one hand, and poison with the other: thou art feeding thy soul with substance and with shadow, and that makes a sorry mixture. When the shadow is clean taken away, and thou hast nothing but the substance, then art thou a strong man, fed upon substantial meat.

Last of all, dear friends, I believe that, when a man is weak, he becomes strong to a large extent, because *his weakness compels him to concentrate all his faculties.*

A sense of weakness brings out all the forces of a resolute spirit, and leads him to call in all the energy within

his reach. When I have preached to you in extreme weakness, as I have often done, when I have afterwards read the sermon, I have been much more satisfied with it than I have been with others in which I felt more pleasure at the time.

God helps us most when we most need his help; and, besides that, the man himself is, by his weakness, forced to use himself right up. When a man feels himself to be rather a large vessel, he puts in the tap somewhere near the top, and only a small supply flows out to the people; but when he is, in his own feelings, like a poor little cask with only a small supply in it, he puts the tap right down at the bottom, and permits all that is in the barrel to flow forth. Many a poor, weak brother, who says all the little that he knows, gives forth more instruction than the learned divine who only favors his people with a small portion of his vast stores. When a man, in serving God, spends himself to the last farthing, he will often far more enrich his hearers than the man of ten talents who uses his resources with a prudent parsimony. Dear brother, it will often be a good thing for you to feel, "Now, God helping me, I must do my very utmost this time. I have so little ability that every faculty within me must be wide awake, and serve God at its best." Thus your weakness will arouse you, and set you on fire, and, by the blessing of God, it will be the means of gaining you strength.

Very well, then, let us pick up our tools and go to our work rejoicing, feeling—Well, I may be weaker, or I may be stronger in myself, but my strength is in my God. If I should ever become stronger, then I must pray for a deeper sense of weakness, lest I become weak

through my strength. And if I should ever become weaker than I am, then I must hope and believe that I am really becoming stronger in the Lord. Whether I am weak or strong, what matters it? He who never fails and never changes will perfect his strength in my weakness, and this is glory to me. Amen.

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Plain Directions to Those Who Would Be Saved from Sin.
Peter's Restoration.
The Blood of the Lamb, the Conquering Weapon.
All at It.
No Compromise.
A Paradox.

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